

**Institute of Education
University of London**

**Leading primary schools through and beyond
special measures**

A study of headteachers leading cultural transformation
within primary schools

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COMMENTARY on the DOCTORATE IN EDUCATION (EdD) PROGRAMME

This commentary recounts an intellectual and professional journey – one undertaken through the most critical and influential stage of my career in education. It charts the opportunities presented to me as both practitioner and researcher in primary education. It accounts for the discoveries made and a greater awareness gained as a result of that journey.

I applied to study for the EdD degree to enhance my own sense of professionalism. I hoped to achieve this through developing critical perspectives on the changing demands of my role and through gaining deeper theoretical understandings. However, this professional doctorate proved considerably more than critical reflection. It led me along an experiential pathway resulting in a closer confluence of my studies and working life. During this period of study I encountered a series of unforeseen changes in my professional roles and experience. This resulted in a more intensive interplay and consequent dynamic between the academic choices and professional decisions in which I became involved. This in turn fed into that professional life, defining a higher level of professional identity. I believe this provided greater opportunity for a deeper experience and a broader reflection than hitherto anticipated. It enhanced my awareness and understanding in interpreting and making sense of the professional challenges facing me. Hence, a study of headship influenced a desire to return to the practice of headship, resulting in me leading a school in special measures. This duly triggered an interest in the complexity of removing schools from that position, especially amidst the overly-simplistic solutions encountered in current policy statements.

Choosing forms of enquiry is inevitably influenced by personal and professional identity. Ambiguity in the role of educational professional, researching at doctoral level, and concurrently fulfilling a demanding post, inevitably arises from conflicts of time, attention and priority. But it does not necessitate inhabiting the conceptual equivalent of a parallel universe. Rather each part of that duality acts to re-energise the other, although this meant ensuring that a sense of academic and professional equilibrium had to be maintained throughout.

My **first assignment** started at the then current point in my career as a local education authority (LEA) primary inspector/adviser. This essay enabled a critical examination of the role's development during a rapidly changing educational climate. I focused on how professionals both shape their organisations (the organisation serves the professionals) and how organisations shape their professionals (the professionals serve the organisation – specifically in the case of the public service professions). I considered Clarke and Newman's (1997) four categories of change: organic, external threat, transformative and revolutionary. This was a prelude to my first encounter with what was to become an enduring interest and theme – recognition of the importance of the interplay between agency and structure. In this assignment I explored the notions and dynamics between managerialism and professionalism, concluding that professionalism involves reconstruction of the advisory role. It has to cohabit with the consequences of the discourse of change and accordingly recalibrate, and rejuvenate the concept of professionalism within the work and circumstances of transformed organisations.

My **second and third assignments** focused on theoretical and practical considerations in relation to empirical enquiry. My dual role of practising professional and researcher provided unique opportunities for accessing important and otherwise less accessible research sites. I used this opportunity to explore how I could design small-scale research projects and rehearse different methods of research, especially interviewing and capturing practitioner voice. In this I sought to explore the dichotomy of managerialism and professionalism as it concerned me – aspects of the technical-rational approaches to primary education. I investigated how primary teachers adapted and developed their pedagogy to meet statutory target setting, while seeking to improve the standards of teaching in their institutions. In these 'real-world enquiries' my intention was to provide clear definitions of problems, identify appropriate settings and populate empirical space with suitable designs. In doing this I explored the ethnographic tradition. This gave me insight into a paradigm that was to influence the remainder of my studies for the degree. Its appeal was its naturalistic, idiographic and holistic position that empowered the research's participants. At this stage I also utilised case study as a research strategy. Using interpretive studies located within the paradigm of 'naturalistic enquiry' enabled me to investigate selected instances dealing with the subtleties and intricacies

of complex educational action. Employment of case study allowed for the use of a range of methods, as fitting in this type of school enquiry.

My **fourth assignment** proved a pivotal moment, shaping my enquiring through the remainder of the degree. I learnt at a much deeper level how enquiry cannot be value free, for all research is characterised by ontological and epistemological assumptions that implicitly form a set of coherent ideas about the nature of the world and ways of seeking meaning. The essay presented the focus and rationale for a small-scale enquiry about children enhancing their spiritual selves through the curriculum. I affirmed that the process of research 'lives' within a pervading understanding of the subject and the personal philosophical and social concerns of the researcher. Accordingly I explored and critiqued the interpretive approach, its scope and limitations, as a means of effecting the enquiry. I explored, at a deeper level, the theoretical grounding for interviewing. This reflected ontological and epistemological assumptions where participants themselves become the constructors and co-constructors of meaning. I learnt that researchers can be the active collaborators in a counter-hegemonic act of creating understanding.

The next two assignments continued to explore tensions familiar to me in my daily work. These are tensions represented in the practice of school improvement in a complex, multi-layered and ambiguous educational environment. So the **fifth assignment** focused on the increased centralisation that brings schools into line with externally defined standards. This begged a question concerning the way varying notions of school improvement have affected the role and autonomy of primary teachers. The essay built on definitions, investigations and explanations of professionalism formerly explored in the first assignment. I argued that although recent and contemporary developments significantly change the perception of primary teaching and teachers, productive counter-action can herald a revitalised professionalism. This demonstrates confidence, innovation and willingness to assume greater responsibility for collaborating in developing relevant theory at the 'cutting-edge' of practice. This in itself then becomes instrumental in shaping a national educational identity.

At this point my professional role was inevitably bringing me into close contact with the practice constituting 21st century headship. Yet this focus came late in the journey and

formed a substantial element of the totality. My purpose in the **sixth assignment** was to investigate recent changes occurring in primary headship during, and resulting from, the school improvement tradition. I became more aware of how the agency of leadership is situated at the interface of policy and action, the motivational force for change and improvement. In considering plans for the institutional focused study (IFS) and thesis, it seemed appropriate to extend my investigations specifically towards the subject of primary headship.

The **IFS** explored the perceptions and practices of experienced and successful headteachers. In contributing to the literature of 'voice', it investigated their experiences and responses during a period in which accountability and prescriptive practices dominated. The research built on my previous enquiry, being located within an interpretive paradigm, the design was driven by a commitment to dialogic and collaborative enquiry. In this assignment I explored the implications of insider research. I devised a protocol to address the ethical issues surrounding conducting and reporting such research. The data were presented through exploratory case studies. These were compiled through documentary review and semi-structured and focused interviews. I additionally used concept mapping as a strategy for investigating real-world complexity, its uncertainties and ambiguities. Through this strategy the representation of participant voice was enhanced. The data analysis revealed that practices had undoubtedly changed within the working lifetimes of the participants. The headteachers were reducing their teaching commitments and effecting more activities concerned with monitoring and evaluation. While they regarded their schools as self-evaluating, all appeared to live in the shadow of external forms of inspection and influence. The headteachers showed determination to provide leadership driven by personal philosophies and clear moral conviction, within the paradoxes and uncertainties of real-world circumstances. Headship was essentially perceived as being value-led, person orientated and ethically grounded.

Unexpectedly for me, my enquiries once more whetted my professional appetite for practising headship. As I considered this role academically, I realised that it represented the unfinished business of my career. As I embarked on the thesis I was seconded (at my request) to the acting headship of a school placed in special measures. Subsequently I assumed the substantive headship in a large inner-city primary school that presented me

with challenging circumstances, although not those of special measures. Nevertheless, from these experiences, the theme of special measures resonated in my mind and reading, especially, and correspondingly, to the current policy climate that seemingly requires 'quick-fixes'.

The **thesis** accordingly drew upon all that I had learnt to date, both theoretically and methodologically. Specifically the study focused on the agency of leadership, influencing and regenerating cultural transformation in the context of special measures. Hence I encountered Giddens' (1984) structuration theory that postulates the role of agency in the context of the duality of structure. I employed narratives of leadership enabling a collaborative and counter-hegemonic exploration of deeper meanings. Through the double hermeneutic, I was able to conceptualise and configure conceptual models demonstrating the relationships and dynamic between headteacher leadership, corporate professionalism and structural arrangements. I explored the contribution of Habermas' (1987) theory of 'communicative action', contrasting notions of a 'systemsworld' and 'lifeworld' in relation to organisational systems and culture. In my understanding of cultural formation and transformation, I drew upon the ideas and theories of Schein (1992), applying them to my own empirical enquiry and analysis of data.

In **summary**, the following themes have provided the lenses for understanding and enriching my professional role. These themes have been explored, although not exhausted, and represent for me continuing interests for enquiry. They are:

1. Understanding professionalism as a contested but newly expanded and enriched term. The enrichment is generated through the conscious choice and action of professionals, reconstructed in the light of new demands and circumstances. This has led to my own professional re-positioning (Hall, 1998) across a range of new roles and responsibilities.
2. Employing the possibilities and limitations of ethnography in seeking answers amid ubiquitous complexity, especially through the benefits of practising and drawing from the double hermeneutic. This represents a potent combination of practitioner and researcher, so highlighting the centrality of researching, and research outcomes, as an element of professional life.

3. Heightening awareness of the role of social agency, demonstrated through professionalism as represented in the voice of primary school teachers and headteachers. The importance, moreover, of the interplay between structure and agency as this performs an essential element in defining the development of professional roles including headship.
4. Re-conceptualising headship as being embedded in the contextual and circumstantial location of schools – based on: style, approach and theory. This is powerfully instanced in leading schools through and beyond special measures. This amounts to a leadership model rooted in person, focused on context and grounded in theory. It offers an alternative to the national prescriptions for the professional development of headteachers.
5. Realising that the culture of schools is determined by, as well as being a determinant of, the school's educational character and aspirations. This has led to an understanding that the process of school improvement cannot meet the requirements for change demanded in every situation. While this improvement is essentially organic (although sometimes instigated through external threat) what may be required is the transformative and revolutionary change. This is represented in the seismic shift of cultural transformation.

In conclusion, I have reflected throughout this degree on the distinctiveness of professional doctorates. Hence my studies have been based on the totality of received experience (helping shape professional choice), my researching and theorising. It has amounted to a life transforming experience that has better prepared me to engage with the complexity underpinning my own professional and social world.

ABSTRACT

The status of special measures has been an outcome of school inspection for more than a decade. This study contributes to understanding the leading of primary schools through and beyond that outcome. Through self-perception, headteachers examine the relationship and interplay between their leadership and their schools' cultures. The study focuses on the agency of leadership through a process of change, so generating propositional ideas that extend the current theoretical framework.

Two cultural typologies are identified that are specifically associated with this status. One is encountered at the outset of the journey of special measures and represents the root of the predicament. The other represents the cultural territory of schools that have moved beyond special measures. The study finds special measures to be an episodic journey of change. So doing it identifies three distinctive phases (the last divided into sub-phases representing an increasing complexity). In each the theme of culture and leadership is explored through the application of a conceptual model. These are configured to demonstrate the necessary dynamic for the formulation and transformation of schools' cultures. The differing and adaptive manifestations of phase-specific leadership are respectively described as: leading through cultural dissonance, leading counter-culturally, and leading through cultural congruence.

The literature review identifies three conceptual orientations of leadership, each accordingly being related to special measures. These are technical-rational, transformational and critical forms of leadership. Each is seen as making a contribution at some point and to some degree through the course of the journey. The study, moreover, presents a conceptualisation of headship based on school context and circumstance – style, approach and theoretical positioning. This formulation emphasises the appropriateness of the leadership practice offered at given moments. However, the overall success of moving beyond special measures lies in each school's capacity for journeying through the phases to a position of cultural congruence.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my family for their endless love and uncompromising support throughout this period of study – Caroline, Joe, Becky, Daniel, Anna, Rachel and Sarah. It is also in memory of my mother Joan, who died in the year before completion.

DECLARATION

I confirm that the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own work, except where explicit attribution has been made.

The thesis is 45,009 words in length (word allowance: 45,000) excluding the commentary, abstract, acknowledgements, glossary of acronyms, references and appendices.

GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

AI	Attached Inspector
BPS	British Psychological Society
DES	Department of Science
DfEE	Department for Education and Employment
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
EdD	Doctor in Education (degree of)
GP	General Practitioner
HE	Higher Education
HMCI	Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (England and Wales)
HMI	Her Majesty's Inspectorate
I-DED	Inter-dependent elemental drivers
IFS	Institution Focused Study
IOE	Institute of Education (University of London)
IPPR	Institute for Public Policy Research
LEA	Local Education Authority
LPSH	Leadership programme for serving headteachers
MORI	Market and Opinion Research International
NCSL	National College of School Leadership
NPQH	National Professional Qualification for Headship
NQT	Newly Qualified Teacher
NUT	National Union of Teachers
OfSTED	Office for Standards in Education
PANDA	Performance and Data Assessment
PNS	Primary National Strategy
PSCL	Primary Strategy Consultant Leader
RgI	Registered Inspector
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SyQ	Systemic Intelligence
TES	Times Education Supplement
TTA	Teacher Training Agency
UK	United Kingdom

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Chapter 1

Introduction to the study

INTRODUCTION

This study contributes to an understanding of the leadership of schools through and beyond special measures. In so doing it examines how primary headteachers influence and generate this specific circumstantial change and examines the relationship between leadership and culture. Through self-perception it explores the headteachers' leadership, their actions, and the messages transmitted in the process of transforming school culture in the extreme circumstances constituting special measures. The study, furthermore, explores the episodic nature of the change through the distinctive phases constituting the journey of recovery and the cultural typologies encountered.

BACKGROUND, FOCUS and SCOPE OF ENQUIRY

The efficacy of educational leadership through headship is now widely celebrated in a breadth of policy documentation (e.g. OfSTED, 1998). It is also proclaimed in the current theoretical literature, albeit with somewhat more caution and circumspection (Hopkins, 2000; West *et al.*, 2000; Harris, 2002). Sergiovanni (2001) maintains: 'Rare is the effective school that does not have an effective head' (p.xi). Fullan (2001) states: 'I know of no improving school that doesn't have a headteacher who is good at leading improvement' (p.141). However, essentially what is known has tended to be through survey, case study and inspection evidence. Hall and Southworth (1997) maintain that claims regarding the differences made by headteachers are more assertions and beliefs than empirically based and justified statements. Understandably, there are few experimental studies that could provide certainty regarding the precise nature of causal relationships between the quality of leadership and standards of pupil outcomes, even in the most effective schools (Gronn, 1996; Grint, 2003). Matthews and Sammons (2004) assert: 'Causality may seldom be ascertained with certainty in education or social enquiry' (p.12). There is therefore, a need for further empirical understanding as to how leadership impacts in real-world contexts (Gunter, 2001; Hopkins, 2000) for what is known is largely informative rather than definitive (Grint, 2003). Hopkins (2000) offers the critique that most commentators tend to 'conflate their own views about what leadership should be with their descriptions of what leadership actually is – hence they fail to discipline themselves by locating their positions in empirical research' (p.40).

So what does this mean for the headteachers of primary schools deemed ineffective, specifically those leading schools placed in special measures? The study is focused on the leadership of these schools, schools where 'high-calibre leadership is inevitably required to improve the school sufficiently in order to bring it out of special measures' (Matthews and Sammons, 2004, p.44). Regarding such schools OfSTED state: 'The leadership of the headteacher is crucial to the speed and success of overcoming weaknesses and solving problems' (OfSTED, 1999a, p.38). Until recent times however, this field of enquiry has also been represented by limited empirical evidence (Southworth, 1999a; Gunter, 2001), although this is currently expanding (e.g. Harris and Chapman, 2002; Lee-Corbin, 2005; Nicolaidou, 2005). Accordingly, this study gives voice to a group of headteachers who have lived through the experience of leading schools and communities from the public event of being deemed a 'failing' institution, to the point where that designation can be left behind. In doing so the enquiry assembles seven case studies that concentrate on this distinct aspect of leadership from this discrete perspective (the headteacher's self-perception). These headteachers examine and offer their perceptions as to how successful (or otherwise) they feel they have been. They explore their actions as social actors engaged in producing and reproducing their social world (Blaikie, 1993) over-against, and in the interplay with, the powerful influence of contextually formulated social structures – this idea being predicated upon the precepts of structuration theory.¹ Gunter (2001) sees this position as representing a stark contrast between headteachers positioned by the economic interests controlling the state, and headteachers 'capable of agency through exercising professional judgement and discretion' (p.41).

At this juncture it must be recognised that leadership research cannot always be successfully located in one person (Crawford, 2002; Horner, 2003). Yet each school in the UK, irrespective of size, will only have one post of headteacher – and it is emphasised that it is the self-perception of the agency of that leader that forms the focus of the enquiry. (The study still recognises the broader principles of distributive leadership (Bennett *et al.*, 2002), as will be demonstrated.) The cases do not claim to be studies of each school's performance per se, as for example, those presented in the DfEE

¹ This links to the perennial sociological debate concerning the influence and independence of the individual as and over the force of society and culture (Giddens, 1982, 1984) a notion expanded in chapter 3 of this study.

publication 'The Road to Success'² (DfEE, 1997). Equally the study does not purport to be objectively 'looking-at' or 'in-on' the phenomenon of headship in order to provide an externally verified and academically dispassionate perspective. Rather it aims to capture a process whereby selected headteachers critically examine their experiences in leading failing primary schools through the process of cultural change and transformation,³ in the context of real-world complexities. Essentially the study presents (employing nautical metaphors) the portrait of the captain, not of the ship – the view from the bridge and not that from the quarterdeck or the engine room. It thereby seeks to offer a corrective to some contemporary theorising and policy-led solutions that can, it is contended, lead to over-simplification (e.g. OfSTED, 1999a,b).

It is acknowledged, from the outset, that culture can frequently be the 'black hole' of school improvement (Stoll, 1999, p.68). Nevertheless, in a review of leadership literature for NCSL, Bush and Glover (2003) found the relationship and connection between organisational culture and leadership to be an area needing further empirical enquiry. This study demonstrates that leadership of cultural transformation is an essential feature in schools recovering from, and moving beyond, special measures. It shows that the schools progressed through phases of change, with each phase providing a distinctive contribution to the overall episodic journey of recovery and improvement. Definitions of culture are various, sometimes practical, but frequently complex and theoretical (Learmonth, 2000). Schein (1985) states:

the term 'culture' should be reserved for the deeper level of basic assumptions and beliefs that are shared by members of an organisation, that operates unconsciously, and that defines in a basic 'taken-for-granted' fashion an organisation's view of itself and its environment (p.6).

The cases, as will be seen, explore challenging circumstances presented by the institutional 'ghosts' and 'legacies' that make up a school's 'natural history' (Gray *et al.*, 1999, p.58).

² This DfEE study provides 'exemplars of good practice (to be) of practical relevance to any school seeking to improve itself' (p.2).

³ Fullan uses the term 'reculturing' (Fullan, 1993, p.68); however, the researcher uses the term 'transformation', as, for him, reculturation has the connotation of reformation (or reordering) rather than the more radical and holistic connotations of transformation.

Implicit within the purposes of the research is the recognition of the distinctive and unique contribution of each school's experience. Effectiveness researchers have often laboured to identify the characteristics of effective schools with some measure of success (Sammons *et al.*, 1995). However, characteristics of schools in difficulty have proved more illusive and diverse (Reynolds, 1998). The researcher's role in this study has been to capture, as accurately as possible, interpretations of the dynamic of the inter-relationship between headteacher agency and the structural forces judged to be malfunctioning, although this concept of malfunction (or failing) requires further deconstruction (Stoll and Myers, 1998).

The study also recognises that failing is more than an institutional event (Fink, 1999). The wider educational environment provides a context and a predominating culture in which these dramas happen. It is argued here that there is a tendency for this culture to be both prescriptive (Gunter *et al.*, 1999) and audit-driven (Power, 1997). In this there is a general expectation of, or even preoccupation with, 'outcome-led' and standards-based school improvement demonstrated in measurable results (Harris, 2002, p.6). There is, furthermore, a dominant discourse of headship founded on the strongly normative and seeming certainties of the elements of managerialism (Thrupp and Willmott, 2003). Yet the subtext of the situation is that each headteacher is equally leading in a climate of ambiguity, complexity and paradoxical tension, a situation currently facing all primary headteachers and their professional communities (Day *et al.*, 2000; Harris and Chapman, 2002). Sergiovanni (2001) argues that leadership is about the successful identification and understanding of the problems. Frequently this means successful accommodation, a competency he terms the 'management of paradox' (p.53) and this inevitably involves ethical and emancipatory considerations of leadership. Southworth (1999a) states:

Much of the empirical work on headteachers tends to be pre-occupied with effectiveness, and by implication finding solutions that can be generalised to other sites, while the ethical and emancipatory aspects of school leadership are largely overlooked (p.51).

Therefore it is this complexity that is narrated and explored by the participants in this research. It is embedded in the human stories that contribute in themselves to an understanding of the experience of failing and, through a process of analysis, provide elaboration and enriching interpretation that continues to respect the integrity of original

viewpoints (Schutz, 1963). This process has been described as the ‘double hermeneutic’ (Giddens, 1984, p.284) where that which has already been interpreted is further interpreted and expanded by new and enriching layers of meaning. This concept may be further developed in the expression of a ‘hermeneutic circle’ (or spiral), whereby there is ever greater insight through the process of re-working material in the light of growing understanding, and the appending of existing theories and empirical insights/enquiry (Bentz and Shapiro, 1998, p.42).

In a previous study (Walker, 2001) I concluded on the following note: ‘When you go deeper you go different’ (Fullan, 1993, p.vii). While these words were intended to indicate how that study had positively affected my professional practice, they may equally be applied to the manner in which I approached this more extensive and re-positioned study. I have built on the former, and incorporated features that served the best interests and process of this enquiry, specifically through a manageable number of cases and one research question. This was done to allow greater depth in this area of interest. Yet as already stated, and in the final reckoning, the issue is about people as social agents and not primarily about the success (or otherwise) of the institutions themselves. Nonetheless, the focus seeks to understand and encapsulate the institutional life in which these headteachers’ social agency operates. So encapsulating the discussion and the points made thus far, the research question for the enquiry is:

Through the experience of special measures, and subsequent recovery, how does headteacher agency influence and regenerate the formulation and transformation of culture in primary schools?

CONCLUSION and OVERVIEW

This chapter has set the background, focus and scope for this study. Chapter 2 concentrates on reviewing the theoretical and empirical literature relating to leadership. It organises the material around three conceptual orientations of leadership, which, it is contended, relate to the headship of schools in special measures. It presents a model exploring the relationship between leadership and culture, one that is applied and tested through the course of the enquiry. The chapter also focuses on the role of OfSTED and

the nature of the particular status of special measures. Chapter 3 sets out the scope and design of the research, explaining how data was collected and analysed and how the three phases of special measures, and the themes within them, were identified from the evidence of the enquiry. From analysis of the data, chapter 4 explores the ongoing themes of the enquiry, those of culture and leadership. These are developed through the three phases of special measures, as are the supporting themes that are specific to each of the phases – in particular that of the role of external agency. The chapter presents empirically derived theoretical constructs (models) from the data within each phase – these serving to understand the relationship between leadership and culture. The chapter describes the differences between the phases and the cultural types – explaining why the second phase does not constitute a culture in its own right. In so doing it identifies the culture type of failing schools and the type that marks the territory beyond special measures. The final chapter draws tentative theoretical conclusions, considers issues for further research and identifies professional application and dissemination.

Chapter 2

Literature review: leadership, culture, OfSTED and accountability

INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the principal elements of the enquiry, namely leadership, culture, and public accountability afforded through OfSTED. The chapter identifies three broad and overlapping conceptual orientations of leadership – related, as the study progresses, to leading through the three phases of special measures. The relationship between leadership and culture is explored and presented through a conceptual model that seeks to explain cultural formulation and transformation in primary schools. The model postulates that which is termed the ‘inter-dependent elemental drivers’ (I-DEDs) of a school’s organisational culture. The role of OfSTED is considered within the current accountability culture.

In summary, the main sections are:

- the conceptual orientations of leadership;
- leadership and culture;
- OfSTED and the culture of accountability.

CONCEPTUAL ORIENTATIONS OF LEADERSHIP

Grint (2003) states:

the more I read, the less I understood. This was partly to do with a Socratic problem: the more I read, the more I realised how ignorant I was ... when I stopped trying to read everything about leadership and began to try and think through the implications of my problem and started my quest for understanding, a light of some form began to emerge (p.89).

In this literature review it is necessary to establish a means of focusing on a range of literature, relevant to the focus of the enquiry – leading cultural change and development. In doing so there are three broad conceptual orientations or positions of contemporary leadership identified (Gronn, 2003, p.7, uses the term ‘architectural forms of leadership’), each of which may be associated with leading in a different and challenging territory or climate. These are here termed as: technical-rational leadership; transformational

leadership; and, critical leadership. However, while these distinctive and broad orientations may be precisely discerned, this review does not aim to present a synthesis of that literature, since that essential diversity renders it incapable of being reconciled into a single theory. Furthermore, these contested, overlapping and interrelated orientations reveal a number of seemingly conflicting ideas and ideologies that are outlined and considered later in this chapter (e.g. 'instructional', 'invitational' and 'distributed' leadership associated respectively with: Leithwood *et al.*, 1999; Sergiovanni, 1984; Boleman and Deal, 1997). In contrast, Sergiovanni (2001) presents three orientations. First, bureaucratic leadership, focused on the 'positional power' (Fink, 2005, p.4) of the headteacher. Second, personality leadership, focused on the personality and motivational skills of the headteacher. Third, morally based leadership, focused on collective and devolved responsibility. Grace (1995) also predicates three orientations or leadership positions. These are first, headteacher-managers; second, headteacher-professionals; and third, headteacher-resistors. However, what is clear is that while the terminologies may differ there is a general recognition of distinctive territories occupied by different conceptual orientations. There therefore follows a description of the three leadership orientations, identified for the purposes of this study.

Technical-rational leadership

The first orientation to be considered is technical-rational leadership. This represents the pursuit of effectiveness through the development of instrumental forms of efficiency. It is predicated on standards-based reform in an educational climate currently tending to promote a rationalistic view of leadership accentuating technical features (Day *et al.*, 2000). Hopkins (2001) defines this as 'a performance based approach' (p.180). This application of 'bureaucratic rationality' (Southworth, 1999a, p.54) or what MacBeath (1998) terms as 'scientific managerialism', is claimed to represent 'a belief in a right way, and (a) faith in procedures of hard data to inform decision making ...' (MacBeath, 1998, pp.28, 29). Gunter *et al.* (1999) maintain the approach has become seemingly mandatory in the current climate. It exists as an officially sanctioned and approved model of effective primary school leadership and this may be demonstrated in academic literature as well as policy and professional documentation (e.g. OfSTED, 1999a,b; 2003). It can be maintained that the

thrust of the ideology results in policy impacting on professionals rather than professionals on policy (Ball, 1995). Earlier the researcher claimed that this:

mounts a severe challenge to the autonomy and credibility of professionalism with an agenda of 'value for money' (based on economy, efficiency and effectiveness) ... arguably a significant attempt to impose managerial constraints on professionalism. ... Inglis (1989) argues the power of managerialism is in the suppression of moral and political argument, which accordingly turns responsibility and accountability into the functions of state surveillance (Walker, 1999, p.8).

It may be contended that this rationalistic approach to leadership fails to recognise the difficulty of facilitating change and development in the messiness of real-world reality (Robson, 2002). Equally it falls short within the context of the complexity of the human condition, especially in relation to cognition. Klemp (cited in Lester, 1995, p.47) identifies critical cognitive abilities that can be generalised across a diversity of occupations. These are: the ability to conceptualise and create themes and patterns from complex information; the ability to learn to understand complex issues and resolve conflicts of information; and, the ability to learn from experience by reflection, theory and the synthesis of alternatives. Argyris (1993) postulates the notion of double-loop learning, acting out conventional thinking, challenging and adjusting existing wisdom. This, he maintains, results in a constructivist framework, with critical reflection on practice and theory, critical enquiry into practice and theory, and a creative synthesis of practice and theory. Lester (1995) explores the implications of moving beyond a technical-rational framework of knowledge and competencies. In so doing, he distinguishes between two models: A and B. Model A is a technical-rational model, where practice involves working with pre-defined and solvable problems yielding to logical solutions and pre-determined knowledge. Model B is predicated upon a creative, interpretive approach to professional work. Model A is therefore governed by logic rather than values and focuses on getting things done rather than the validity of the solutions. The model is technocratic and has severe limitations as a tool for developing interpretive and creative practitioners. Conversely, model B represents the practitioner operating in an environment hallmarked by complexity, dynamism and uncertainty, where messiness defies technical and tidy solutions (this resonates with chaos/complexity theory, e.g. Fullan, 1999). Hence, in this model the theorising of the situation must happen before the problem can be constructed

(the ability to interpret the meaning of situations from a range of perspectives and standpoints). It employs a cycle of problem-setting and solving, in a knowledge-creating and practice-generating spiral, where problems and solutions are somebody's problems and solutions and the role of the professional is to make well-informed, discretionary and value-based judgements. Model B is based on fundamental processes of learning, the ongoing self-critical dialogue of stepping back and reframing in the light of experience, theory and knowledge. It involves seeking out new knowledge, theories and ways of doing things. It focuses on experimenting and trying out hunches, synthesising ideas, and resources in order to create desired outcomes and generate new possibilities. Nevertheless, model B does not replace but subsumes model A, the latter being but one component of practice overall.

The approach embedded in the orientation highlights the distinction between the rational and rationalistic, the latter being concerned with adherence to externally prescribed techniques and a disproportionate attention to systematic detail and systems. Habermas (1984, 1987) postulates the theory of communicative action (rooted in Heidegger (1962) and focused on the question: What does it mean to say that a person, or an action, or way of life, is rational?). He counterposes cognitive-instrumental (functionalist) reasoning, a process connected with the effective delivery of targets and the most efficient use of financial resources (therefore synonymous with this form of headship – and by association leading schools in special measures) with other forms of reasoning capacities accentuating subjective and inter-subjective duties within a rich tapestry of societal interactions. Hence the latter perspective is about communicative rationality, which focuses on shared understandings through language and other means of communication. In essence, communicative action is concerned with being open to criticism and able to give good reasons for beliefs, decisions and actions (Myerson, 2001).

Other criticisms of the technical-rational conceptualisation centre on the emphasis of the headteacher's agency at the risk of marginalizing and disempowering other members of the school's community. Children and teachers are constructed as objects to be manoeuvred and relegated to passive follower status, while becoming integrated into accountability mechanisms. For at the core of this approach is a set of principles sustaining the idea of bureaucratic managers imposing order, clarity and certainty on

disorderly organisations. This they do essentially by themselves and without benefit of shared and distributive leadership. This idea finds resonance in models of effective leadership based on much of the effectiveness research (e.g. emphasis on 'firm and purposeful leadership' (Sammons *et al.*, 1995, p.8)) while tending to diminish, relatively, the ethical and emancipatory dimensions of leadership. This may be instanced by schools subscribing to the headteacher's vision and constructing staff as passive recipients, a position that may be explained (although not justified) in the context of role theory (Southworth, 1999a). Alternatively, it is contended that the conceptualisation and consequent formulation of followership is an important feature of the culture of schools, as well as of that of the wider educational environment. Grint (2003) maintains that without followers, leadership cannot exist. He states: 'Leaders must spend at least some of their time constructing not just followers, but a community of followers' (p.93). Gunter (2001) presents the dilemma for teachers (as followers) in the technical-rational climate, and by implication the challenge for their leaders:

For teachers to penetrate this growing divide, they have to play the managerial language and data game through performance management self auditing and evidence of competence. Teachers have to turn their backs on teaching as a conceptually informed practice integrated with learning, to a regime of numbers and graphs, designed to tell them what does and does not work (p.105).

Therefore it is not surprising that Gunter *et al.* (1999) pose the question: 'Why is autocratic leadership continuing to be promoted through a repackaging and re-labelling process?' (p.xxii) – this form of leadership being particularly reflected in national models of headteacher training (e.g. NPQH). They further claim that current approaches to the training and development of headteachers are more akin to a domesticating process, with headship perceived as being a highly normative activity. In consideration of the strivings of headteachers seeking to carry out their roles, they state:

The agency of headteachers is emphasised at the expense of the structural context in which their work is located ... (maintaining this creates generic heads who) bring their vision and mission to the school in which the insistence on the right to manage is legitimised as a means of marginalizing the structural injustices within the community (Gunter *et al.*, 1999, p.xxi).

Hence aspiring headteachers are being presented with a course of study offering regulatory mechanisms masquerading as an academically challenging rite of passage. Conversely, it may be argued that the reality is not that of a professional threshold, but rather a managerial straightjacket. Gunter *et al.* (1999) maintain that training within this development paradigm is 'sold to educational professionals' (p.xx) as the desirable characteristics of leadership. Their first concern is that it is reconstructed management lacking an ethical commitment to children and their development. Secondly it is predicated on activities where there is a managed culture rather than professional relationships reflecting the realities of dilemma and complexity. Thirdly it is normative and based on prescription. Finally it represents activities that are ahistorical. Eraut (1994) distinguishes between different types and combinations of professional knowledge and practice. He sees the backbone of current leadership training as the largely procedural or 'process' based (knowing how) (p.80), and the missing element as the 'propositional' (knowing that) (p.103). He maintains that in developing the professional knowledge and competences of headteachers, there is a danger of the former form being developed without due regard to the latter (Eraut, 1994).

In conclusion, Barthes (cited in Bowe *et al.*, 1992, p.13) explores the implications of 'readerly' and 'writerly' texts. This idea differentiates between those seeking to impose particular readings/understandings and those inviting active participation in the constructivist notion of the creation of meaning/s (Sim and Van Loon, 2001). Only the latter process is implicit within the notion of professionalism. Gunter *et al.* (1999) maintain that: 'The spaces in which individuals may be creative will not be available in a readerly text where there is strong direction and prescriptive outcomes. However, in writerly texts we can see through to something beyond' (p.xxvii). Hence cultural environments characterised by challenge and opportunity require the benefit of leadership that is contextually grounded, authentic in purpose and professional in action.

Transformational leadership

The second orientation is transformational leadership. The literature makes much of the distinction between the transactional and transformational orientations of leadership (Southworth, 1998; Gunter, 2001; Hopkins, 2003). Transactional models are grounded in

contractual action and arrangements, tending to be preferred within controlling and regulated systems. Conversely, transformational models introduce ethical considerations and have strong moral dimensions (Clegg and Billington, 1997), this being particularly favoured where there is decentralisation (West *et al.*, 2000). Day *et al.* (2000) found that headteachers' values and visions tended to be primarily moral (focused on pupil and staff needs (Fullan, 2003a)) rather than instrumental (focused on economic considerations). Nevertheless, Hopkins (2000) maintains that transformational is a 'plastic' term, one subject to 'conceptual pluralism' (p.41) – and this in itself requires some exploration. In the Hay/Mcber model (cited in Lester, 1995, p.47), for example, notions of transformational leadership (formulated for LPSH) are based on narrower definitions of success than one propounding learning organisations facilitating moral and social justice through developing powerful and emancipatory learning (Sergiovanni, 2001; Earley and Weindling, 2004). It is therefore necessary to negotiate the meaning of the term, through constructing an identification from the current literature, and in order to provide a working definition for the purposes of this study.

In defining precisely what the terminology implicates, it is contended that it means transforming or changing situations, not merely the structures, but the way people think and act. Gunter (2001) maintains that transformational leadership is about building unified and common interests between leaders and followers, in direct contrast to the technical-rational forms considered above. This represents a compelling idea for schools in special measures. It is about constructing reality through rigorous questioning, sometimes applying scepticism and always through critical enquiry (Clegg and Billington, 1997). Leithwood *et al.* (1999) suggest that cultural change involves a number of core activities. These are setting direction, developing people, dealing with organisational matters (including consideration of structure) and building relationships. The notion is likewise ethically formed and value driven. Southworth (1995, 1999a) grounds the term transformational leadership within the constructs of critical social theory. He states:

It is leadership which addresses matters of social justice, organisational power and emancipation because transformational leaders are critically aware that management is more or less a 'technology of control' (Bates, 1989, p.8). Therefore implicit in the arguments of those who advocate this theory is the belief that good leaders are transformational because such leaders are moral and ethical actors (1999a, p.51).

Grace (1995, 1997) and Gunter (2001) identify transformational leadership with charismatic leaders, where by implication there is an emphasis on the attributes of heroic individuals. It is here contended that an association with leading through special measures is formed through a requirement for 'high profile' and 'tough' leadership (OfSTED, 1999a, p.38). Southworth (1999b) states: 'Heroic leadership best describes the way policy makers regard headship' (p.20). Yet Fullan (2001) maintains that such leaders 'inadvertently often do more harm than good because, at best, they provide episodic improvement followed by frustrated or despondent dependency' (p.1). Chirichello (cited in Bush and Glover, 2003, p.14) maintains that transformational leadership can be criticised as being a means of controlling teachers and therefore being more likely to be acceptable to the leading than the led. Allix (2000) takes the argument further, stating that it has the potential to become a 'despotic' form of leadership (p.7) due to strong connections with some pervasive and charismatic features. Thus Hargreaves (2003a) contends that: 'Sustainable improvement towards knowledge society goals therefore depends less on heroic individual leaders, than on shared or distributed leadership' (p.156).

Some claim that the theoretical constructs of transformational leadership are supported by limited focused empirical enquiry (Capper, cited in Southworth, 1995; Hopkins, 2000). Moreover, the term has not been adequately linked to practical applications and outcomes, especially in primary settings. Southworth found that headteachers were caught in a mode of headship shaped by ideas of domination and authoritarianism (Southworth, 1995). He states:

Although the idea of transformational leadership is popular in educational management texts, with several writers advocating it, the notion has not been explored or investigated in relation to current trends in school leadership in action.... Much of the empirical work on headteachers tends to be pre-occupied with effectiveness, while the ethical and emancipatory aspects of school leadership are largely overlooked or totally ignored (p.51).

Southworth's subsequent empirical work (Southworth and Conner, 1999; Southworth and Lincoln, 1999) shows that headteachers use techniques that are evidence-based and research-orientated in self-improving schools. However, he is by no means sanguine regarding the creative force of transformational leadership, because of the preponderance

and pre-eminence of policy over the influence of theory and practice. He states: 'the prospects for transformational leadership in schools in England look, to put it bluntly, bleak' (Southworth, 1999a, p.63).

Nevertheless, it is evident that transformational leaders seek to bring about cultural change (Burns, 1978; Leithwood and Jantzi, 1990; Caldwell, 1999). But the type of institutional culture implied must always be questioned on important issues such as power and delegation; for some claim that in thriving organisations there needs to be more staff involvement in policy formation and implementation (MacBeath, 1998; Day *et al.*, 2000). Handy (1976) (referring to managerialist and centralist HE leadership) speaks of power cultures, from which the 'central power-source, with rays of power and influence spread out from the central figure' (p.178). Leadership permeating to the classroom level (and therefore learning) is essential, and this is more likely to occur in a supportive and stimulating culture (Leithwood *et al.*, 1997, cited in MacBeath, 1998, p.28). However, it must be recognised that cultural models, such as the 'moving mosaic' (Hargreaves, 1994, p.62) (exploring changing interrelationships of leadership and organisational cultures) require particular qualities of leadership and followership that are representative of more than compliance if the desire to lead is to be fruitfully devolved and shared. Without this involvement lies the danger of 'groupthink syndrome' (Janis, 1985, pp.168-182), a tendency to produce uncritical like-mindedness within a collaborative culture of complicity.

The origin of transformational leadership (Burns, 1978) came at a time when professional autonomy predominated, and schools were perceived as the sole unit of change. Therefore a further question is the extent to which transformational leadership is in line with the structural conditions under which schools now operate in the wider educational culture of tri-level reform (Fullan, 2003b). (Later it is contended that change has to be effected within a complex dynamic of reform, including meso- and macro-levels.) While it may be argued that the previous conceptual orientation of leadership is more in line with contemporary requirements for 'government prescriptions which affect aims, curriculum content and pedagogy, as well as values' (Bush and Glover, 2003, p.15), transformational leadership is more difficult to operate in the current climate. Bottery (2001) maintains there is now a more centralised, more directed, and more controlled educational system.

This he believes has dramatically reduced the possibility of realising genuinely transformational education and leadership (linked with Southworth (1995) mentioned above).

Hopkins (2000) contends that empirical research on transformational leadership asserts the approach to be a 'necessary but not sufficient condition for school improvement' (p.40) because it fails to give enough attention to the conditions of learning. The criticism is that it focuses on the processes and provisions of education, but insufficiently on the outcomes. But Hopkins (2000) does present a case for 'instructional leadership' (p.40) (Southworth (2004) uses the term 'learning-centred leadership' (p.4) – later in the study the term 'pedagogical leadership' is employed, e.g., p.91) as a term increasingly associated with transformational leadership. Hallinger (1992) contends that transformational leadership is a suitable model for promoting instructional leadership among classroom teachers. He maintains this form of leadership directly focuses on the institution's quality of teaching and learning, and the instigation of organisational arrangements that support this happening, namely the professional development of teachers and institutional planning. Elmore (2000) considers the idea of 'loose coupling' (p.19) between policy formulation and instructional practice, emphasising the loose or sometimes tenuous relationship between policymaking and the instructional core of schooling – 'how teachers and pupils interact around content' (p.26). He postulates the notion of policy churn, so called because of the appearance of activity on the surface while the ocean floor remains calm and serene. This, he claims, leads to a propensity towards superficiality and instability, exacerbating the problems of reforming education within the strictures of the present structures. Hopkins (2000) states:

If we are serious about raising the levels of student achievement and learning in our schools then we need to research and develop more than ever before, styles of leadership that promote, celebrate and enhance the importance of teaching and learning and staff development (p.42).

Elmore maintains this involves de-romanticizing leadership from the cult of personality (i.e. heroic leaders: the fallacy of lone practitioners bringing order from chaos (Gunter *et al.*, 1999; Harris *et al.*, 2003)) and recognising the more essential and technical aspects of the role.

West *et al.* (2000) identify two further problems that may be associated with transformational leadership. The first concerns sustainability, where they suggest that its particular characteristics are not liable to be sustained for longer periods. The second is that the practical demands of these features mean that there are few headteachers who can deliver this leadership through the possession of these attributes. These points find some credibility, although one resolution of these particular issues may be found in the understanding and application of distributed leadership.

Finally, in this sub-section, it may be argued that transformational leadership is too focused on transformation alone – achieved at the expense of the efficient management of institutional policy and the effective maintenance of current activity (Bush and Glover, 2003). Earley and Weindling (2004) maintain that the two concepts of leadership and management ‘overlap and that both are necessary’ (p.6). Schein (1992) states: ‘If one wishes to distinguish leadership from management or administration, one can argue that leaders create and change cultures, while managers and administrators live in them’ (p.5). Crawford (2003) believes that management and leadership are twin concepts that act symbiotically. She maintains that inventive management is the bedrock of wise leadership – a complementarity. Crawford states:

An effective inventive manager, who has built up the skills in both insightful and cerebral management from direct experience, may well be able to address the difficulties that some organisations find themselves in. Helping schools move out of special measures may be an example of the process (p.71).

In this sub-section it has been suggested that this complex and symbiotic relationship is difficult to realise within a transformational charismatic orientation. Boleman and Deal (1997) state:

Poorly managed organisations with strong charismatic leaders may soar temporarily only to crash shortly thereafter. The challenge of modern organisations requires the objective perspective of the manager as well as the flashes of vision and commitment wise leadership provides (pp.xiii-xiv).

Critical leadership

The third conceptual orientation is forms of critical leadership. This conceptualisation includes considerations going beyond transactional notions of power and control to a formulation of leadership that is more inclusive. A central concern regards power structures and the way in which educational professionals operate and construct their own sense of meaning (Gunter, 2001; Sergiovanni, 2001).⁴ Educational leadership is not conceived as being constructed by the dominating perspectives of charismatic forms. Rather it introduces a form of leadership that is termed in the literature and related discourse as 'critical leadership practice or studies' (Foster, 1989; Grace, 1995, 1997, 2000) and more recently 'participative' leadership (Bush and Glover, 2003). As will be demonstrated, such conceptualisations are essentially positioned by the tenets of critical social theory (Smyth, 1989), predicated on the principles of social justice and a fear of the decline of individuality in modern society (Marcuse, 1964). Thrupp and Willmott (2003) claim that it is necessary to make an important distinction between critical and uncritical forms of leadership (i.e. those acquiescing, or not, in forms of managerialism). Grace (1995) maintains the distinction is between 'policy scholarship' and 'policy science' (p.2).

Critical theorists see bureaucratic rationality (or administrative science) supporting the meta-values of efficiency and effectiveness (Clarke and Newman, 1997). They view it as socially controlling, overly structural and not benefiting the creative force of human agency. In essence the argument is that headship should fundamentally be an intellectual and creative activity (Gunter, 2001) offering discretionary judgement as an essential element of professionalism (Barnett, 1997). Foster (1989) maintains that leaders critiquing oppressive and dominant traditions, and aiming for the transformation of these conditions, become educative, not by command, but through mutual enlightenment. Hence critical practitioners tend to exhibit features of practice, predicated upon constructs of social justice, democracy and the empowerment and emancipation of others. Suffice it to say that the characteristics of such leaders would challenge many current and normative

⁴ Habermas (cited in White, 1995, p.6) claims three ways of knowing: 'technical, practical and emancipatory'. This study contends that the three conceptual orientations of leadership may be related to these orientations, with the emancipatory related to critical leadership studies.

models of headship encoded in the official documentation of the current school improvement climate (Gunter *et al.*, 1999). In discussing the preponderance of these officially sanctioned approaches they state: 'there is considerable evidence that a critical perspective is absent from the prescriptions of leadership models' (p.xxi). Sergiovanni (2001) states: 'the leadership theories and practices now used are too rational and too scripted to fit into the messy world in which schooling actually takes place' (p.1).

Grace (2000) maintains that the principles of critical leadership studies are formed from 'democratic practice transforming hierarchy' (p.238). Sergiovanni (1995) suggests six underpinning organisational principles for leadership. These are: co-operation, empowerment, responsibility, accountability, meaningfulness, and the delegation of authority (or power) based upon the ability of teachers. Moreover, collaborative construction of meaning 'from different parts of the organisation' (Bush (1995), cited in Bush and Glover, 2003, p.17) leads to common purpose and collective responsibility which in turn may be translated into the germination and gestation of shared and expanding leadership – distributed leadership.⁵ Nevertheless, incomplete understandings of distributive leadership may lead to ideas of quantification where the terminology of 'distributed' may represent a limited concept of leadership associated with delegating a limited and bounded commodity. Conversely, the power and capacity of leadership needs to be nurtured and multiplied, hence generating leadership density. This represents an organic understanding that increases the potential of leadership energy and dynamic within the organisation. Gronn (2002) uses the term 'concertive action' (p.3) which is about 'the additional dynamic which is the product of conjoint activity' (Woods *et al.*, 2004, p.441). Fullan (1993) states: 'Every person is a change agent' (p.22), an idea according with notions of collective and collegiate professionalism. Elmore (2000) maintains that distributed leadership does not mean there is no one responsible for the overall performance of the organization, rather there are multiple sources of guidance and direction, following the contours of expertise in the organisation made coherent through a common culture:

⁵ MacBeath (2004) uses the term '3D leadership' (p.34): distributed, distributive and dispersed. These he claims are essentially the same, although there are nuances of difference in meaning. The first may be associated with delegation, whereas the second and third are concerned with the assumption of leadership on a democratic basis.

It means, rather, that the job of administrative leaders (by this he means school-based leaders, as opposed to leaders who are operating at a district or regional level) is primarily about enhancing the skills and knowledge of people in the organisation, creating a common culture of expectations around the use of those skills and knowledge, holding the various pieces of the organization together in a productive relationship with each other, and holding individuals accountable for the contributions to the collective result (Elmore, 2000, p.15).

These ideas are merged in Elmore's five principles of distributed leadership. First, the purpose of leadership is the improvement of instructional practice and performance, regardless of role. Second, instructional improvement requires continuous learning. Third, learning requires modelling. Fourth, the roles and activities of leadership flow from the expertise required for learning and improvement (this means that co-operation requires understanding that learning grows out of differences in expertise rather than differences in formal authority). Finally, the exercise of authority requires reciprocity of accountability and capacity.

Day *et al.* (2000) postulate the notion of 'post-transformational leadership' (p.166). In this, leadership and management are mutually reinforcing, leadership is diffuse rather than hierarchical, and the enterprise is premised upon articulated values as opposed to simply management systems and market forces. Day and colleagues maintain that recent studies of leadership have productively focused upon the values and moral purposes of leadership and the capacity of leaders to make a difference through their ability to transform (Sergiovanni, 1992, 1995). This implies that moral leadership is based upon headteachers actively 'walking their values' (Bhindi and Duignan, 1996, p.29). It also implies an offering of invitational leadership to the followership of the school. Here: 'Leadership is about communicating invitational messages to individuals and groups with whom leaders interact in order to build and act on a shared and evolving vision of enhanced educational experiences' (Stoll and Fink, 1996, p.109). It gives participants a positive message as to their worth. It emphasises emancipation instead of control and the creation of synergy by capturing the intelligence of the entire organisation through democratic participation and critical self-reflection. Power is seen as a corporate capacity, not instituted within status (not power as domination-over (Blackmore, 1989)⁶). Therefore power is not a finite

⁶ Although not expanded here, this form of leadership has been associated with feminist constructions of leadership.

commodity, but expands through devolvement and sharing (Shakeshaft, 1998). Here it emphasises being grounded in ethics as opposed to instrumentality, in equal opportunities and in a voice for everybody, especially the disempowered.

Hence, in applying critical analysis, the shibboleths of supra-certainty littering contemporary thinking about the role of headship are challenged. This shifts the focus of enquiry to power and democracy, and the generation and ownership of knowledge. MacBeath (1998) maintains that a primary aim for leadership is that it should build 'conditions for reflection, open dialogue, mutual respect for ideas and for both professional and institutional growth' (p.28). Leithwood and Riehl (2003) maintain that leaders operate through other people and from the centre of a web of human relationships. Furthermore, it is argued that headship requires tackling the boundaries of power through 'power-showering', dissemination, and sharing. Dalin (1993) states: 'The only way schools will survive in the future is to become creative learning organisations. The best way students can learn how to live in the future is to experience the life of the "learning school"' (p.19). However, Grace (1997) argues that at the heart of education is the major paradox that while schools should be the cultural agency for working democracy, their pedagogical and managerial practices rarely portray these ideals. He states: 'Few examples exist of serious organisational democracy involving major decisions made by headteachers in association with teachers, pupils and other staff' (p.65).

In conclusion to this sub-section, a review of critical leadership raises interesting questions regarding schools in special measures. But, as will be seen, the particular significance of this third orientation exists in the leadership behaviour that is practised beyond that point.

Summation – conceptual orientations

In summation the boundaries between the three conceptual orientations are, as previously stated, overlapping and interrelated, often subsuming or replicating features of the other related orientations. Hodgkinson (1983, 1991, cited in Grace, 2000, p.242) contends that educational leadership should be seen as an exercise in practical idealism, for it requires an awareness of philosophical principles and moral complexity, as well as the technical competencies.

Foster (1989) identifies five interrelated dimensions of leadership. These not only resonate across the orientations, but through discussions appertaining to leading schools through and beyond special measures. The first of these unifying dimensions is the transformational, as leadership changes others by providing vision and encouraging aspiration. The second is the critical, through reflection and reflexivity. The third is the educative, because leadership has to be analytical. The fourth is the ethical, as it is founded on moral relationships. The final is the emancipatory, as it provides freedom from oppression and domination. Indeed, when considering the totality of the contribution of the contested positions, boundaries and border clashes are frequently forgotten, becoming merged in response to the necessity of real-world pragmatism – especially faced with the realities of a research question as posed in this enquiry (p.17). Bush and Glover (2003) term this approach as ‘contingent leadership’ (p.21) stating that other conceptualisations are partial. Conversely, contingent leadership recognises that different contexts require different approaches, a point to which this study returns in considering the empirical findings. It represents a situation where leaders face and respond to unique organisational circumstances or problems; where, ‘Leaders need to be able to adapt their approaches to the particular requirements of the school, and of the situation or event requiring attention (Bush and Glover, 2003, p.22). Day *et al.* (2000) state:

Effective leaders must have the ability to read and adjust to the particular context or set of circumstances they face. In this respect their leadership behaviour is contingent on context and situation. The choices they make relate directly to their own beliefs, values and leadership style. Different contexts will present different challenges and will require different responses (p.170).

Leithwood *et al.* (1999) state: ‘Outstanding leadership is exquisitely sensitive to context’ (p.4).

In conclusion, and with specific reference to leading schools in special measures, the type of leadership required may depend on the precise episode or phase of change and the specifics of the circumstances of failing, including socio-economic considerations. So while different degrees and consequences of failure are represented in the empirical evidence of this study, particular themes and ideas will be seen to emerge as pertinent to a consideration of special measures. Examples include: instructional leadership that

penetrates the pedagogic core of primary education; distributive leadership positioned within an ethical framework; and the fostering of a community of followership. Fullan (2001) suggests that 'failing schools' need more transactional styles of leadership; whereas this study will contend that recovered schools require professional communities offering greater scope for participative problem-solving and decision-making (Neuman and Simmons, cited in Bush and Glover, 2003, p.17). The study will test these contentions as the enquiry progresses.

LEADERSHIP and CULTURE

An ongoing argument of this study is that leaders influence cultures just as cultures influence leaders (Schein, 1992; Dimmock and Walker, 2002; Nicolaidou, 2005).

Leithwood and Riehl (2003) state: 'Effective school leaders help develop school cultures that embody shared norms, values, beliefs and attitudes ... culture sets a tone and context within which work is undertaken and goals are pursued' (p.7). Equally, and as previously argued, culture can inhibit improvement (Stoll, 1999). Yet while links between leadership and culture are widely acknowledged in the literature, there is a lack of evidence as to how this occurs. Schein (1992) maintains that the dynamic process of culture creation and management (he identifies the stages of: creation, embedding, developing, manipulating and changing) is the essence of leadership, thus realising that culture and leadership are two sides of the same coin (resonating with notions of structure and agency). Schein believes the creation and management of culture is an evolutionary process (contrasting to this study which identifies a process incorporating transformational and more radically edged change in demanding circumstances (Hopkins, 2001)). Schein (1992) states:

Cultures begin with leaders who impose their own values and assumptions on a group. If that group is successful and the assumptions are taken for granted, we have then a culture that will define for later generations of members what kinds of leadership are acceptable. The culture now defines leadership. But as the group encounters adaptive difficulties, as its environment changes to the point where some of its assumptions are no longer valid, leadership comes into play once more. Leadership is now the ability to step outside of the culture that created the leader and to start evolutionary change processes that are more adaptive. This ability to perceive the limitations of one's own culture and to develop the culture adaptively is the essence and ultimate challenge of leadership (pp.1-2).

In considering culture here, attention must necessarily focus on schools in difficulty – especially special measures. Gray (2000) points out there are different types of ineffectiveness or failure. Barber (1998) coins the terms ‘struggling’ and ‘failing’ (pp.25, 27). Rosenholtz (1989) uses the terminology of ‘moderately learning impoverished’ and ‘learning impoverished’ schools (p.80). Harris (2002), in developing the work of Stoll and Fink (1996) and Hopkins (2001), identifies four school typologies named ‘improving’, ‘trapped’, ‘dynamic’ and ‘failing’ (pp.15, 16). Of the failing she states:

These schools are poor at the day-to-day management tasks and tend to be reactive, rather than proactive in their approach to deadlines or problem solving. The lack of leadership in such schools means that the necessary organisation and planning is not in place. In addition, the culture of fragmentation evident in these schools means that development is not possible as the fundamental infrastructure necessary to support such development is not in place. These schools are not collegiate and do not have clearly articulated goals, plans and vision (p.16).

Therefore, in beginning to focus on the culture of schools in difficulty (elaborated in chapter 4) this section acts as a springboard into the practice of the empirical investigation of the study. A theoretical construct is argued and presented, one exploring the study’s central theme of the relationship between leadership and organisational culture. This construct or model accordingly acts as a basis for the investigation through the course of enquiry. The model (figure 2.1, p.42) has been formulated from empirical and theoretical literature previously and presently reviewed, as well as through reflection and consideration of the researcher’s own professional experience. The study seeks to explore and understand more fully the complex relationship between the practice of headteacher leadership and the nature of the culture in which the leading is enacted. In doing so it explores the interplay between leadership and that which the researcher hereinafter terms as being the other ‘inter-dependent elemental drivers’ (the I-DEDs). This tem has been derived specifically for the purposes of this study and so employed to capture a dynamic that appears to be active within the organisational culture. (Southworth and Lee-Corbin (1999) present what they call the inter-penetrating processes in a study of school improvement in general circumstances. They identify educational leadership, staff relationships and teaching and learning factors. This is similar, although different to the conceptualisation in this study, that appertaining to schools journeying through and

beyond special measures.) This model (figure 2.1, p.42) therefore serves to help determine the prevailing culture/s, in these instances appertaining to failing or recovering institutions. The I-DEDs are:

- corporate professionalism, representing the professionalism and collegiality of the followership (both team and individual level);
- structural arrangements and considerations of the school;
- leadership practice, based on the beliefs, values and theoretical position of the headteacher, formulated in the light of the current circumstances of the school.

The first I-DED (corporate professionalism) refers to headteachers' perceptions of the professional establishment (team and individual) and capacities (practice, especially pedagogy) of their schools. This forms a significant element of the context in which headship operates. It concerns relationships between the working behaviours and attitudes of individual staff members and the wider group that comprises the organisational culture of the school.

Harris (2002) cites a lack of 'collegiality' as a cause of failing schools. In using the contestable term 'professionalism' (Walker, 1999) (linked also with the potent and attendant idea of followership already mentioned in this chapter, p.24) the study is focusing on headteachers' perceptions of the agency of individuals in the organisation. Hence this recognises the agency of others – that distributed leadership could, although not necessarily, be located in a wide dispersal of democratic forms of leadership (Woods *et al.*, 2004)). Hence it is about personal response and capability. Hoyle (1980) positioned professionalism through a distinction drawn between restricted and extended professionalism. Restricted professionals place a high value on personal autonomy, regarding work as instinctive. They are not inclined to compare their work with that of colleagues or wider theoretical models. It is suggested here that a link may be formed with the professional negativity of culture type A (existing prior to special measures, see pp.89-90). The extended professional, however, locates work in a broader educational context and places school leadership in a complex and multi-faceted field of operation (Day *et al.*, 2000). Gewirtz *et al.* (1995) maintains that future school leaders need to be conceptually multilingual by operating within multiple and competing discourses. The extended

professional compares work with others, places value on professional collaboration and uses theory and broader educational developments to improve practice. Stenhouse (1975) maintains that the essential quality of extended professionalism is the capacity for autonomous professional development by systematic self-study and enquiry. This is achieved through studying the work of other teachers and by testing ideas through classroom observation. He moves decisively away from separation of theory and practice and postulates the professional as the constructor of professional knowledge.

A further aspect of professionalism (according to the IPPR, 1994) is the possession, by the respective professions' membership, of a corporate body of knowledge. Foucault (1980) maintains that power-knowledge underpins many aspects of contemporary society, and discourse is the means by which power is generated, debated, controlled and distributed. Bennett (2003) contends power is an important aspect of organisational theory. He states: 'It is clear that the individual assumptive world of our organisational members is another dynamic element in our organisational picture' (p.50).

The second I-DED (structural arrangements and considerations) alludes to the discernible features of institutions. These include, for example, policies, strategic and action plans (specifically, post-inspection), curriculum schemes, management systems and frameworks for developing professional pedagogy and capacity (Southworth, 2004).

Harris (2002) maintains that in failing situations consequent forms of leadership are both caused by, and enveloped in, a lack of this 'fundamental infrastructure' (p.16). Schein (1992) states: 'structure is a clear, visible artefact, but its meaning and significance can't be deciphered without additional data' (p.181). While seeming to be less important than professionalism and leadership, this is not necessarily the case. Structures are such as can form the foundation of apparent success. Dalin (1993) states: 'Structure is the dimension that refers to how the school is organised, how tasks are distributed, and the formal decision making structure' (p.8). Bennett (2003) states: 'Structures then both create and are created by power relations', a picture that has already been theoretically postulated and is now in the process of emerging for empirical scrutiny and verification. Southworth (2004) has empirically identified structures and systems as being:

both the background and foreground to leadership. They provide organisation stability and create certainty and common procedures because they form the ground rules for everyone, yet they are the tools of leadership (p.159).

MacGilchrist *et al.* (2004) use the term 'systemic intelligence' (SyQ) (p.111) to describe the organisational and structural mechanisms for turning the school's vision into reality.

Fullan (1993) states: 'In most restructuring reforms new structures are expected to result in new behaviours and cultures, but mostly fail to do so' (p.68). It is recognised that structures, as entities, may of themselves be containing or limiting mechanisms, but equally they may be transformational (see footnote 11, p.57 – structure and analytical dualism). Brown and Eisenhardt (1998) state that: 'too much structure creates gridlock' (p.14). Indeed, schools that sustain improvement have not so much developed systems of structural imperviousness but deep coping strategies (Louis and Miles, 1992). Harris (2002) states:

Good leaders not only manage structure but also they purposefully impact upon the culture in order to change it. In summary the goal of school improvement is to bring about cultural change by altering the processes (structures as a means of facilitation – author's commentary) that occur within the school (p.17).

The close relationship between structure and culture is recognised by Stoll (2003), maintaining that they are interdependent. She contends that most school improvement activities are focused on changes to the institutional and organisational structures because they are relatively easy to manipulate and readily recognisable. This viewpoint is supported by Southworth (2004), who calls them 'the "tools" of leadership' (p.159).

The third I-DED (leadership practice) has been previously discussed in relation to leadership orientations. Leadership, as explicit within the model, may operate within the constraints of the organisational structures (reproducing and legitimising them) or equally it may operate upon those structures (regenerating and revolutionising them). The discussion of the leadership orientations has indicated possibilities for exploring how these conceptualisations, and their related leadership practices, may influence cultural determination and transformation of schools in special measures. This I-DED focuses solely on headteacher agency within the model, while emphasising the difference between

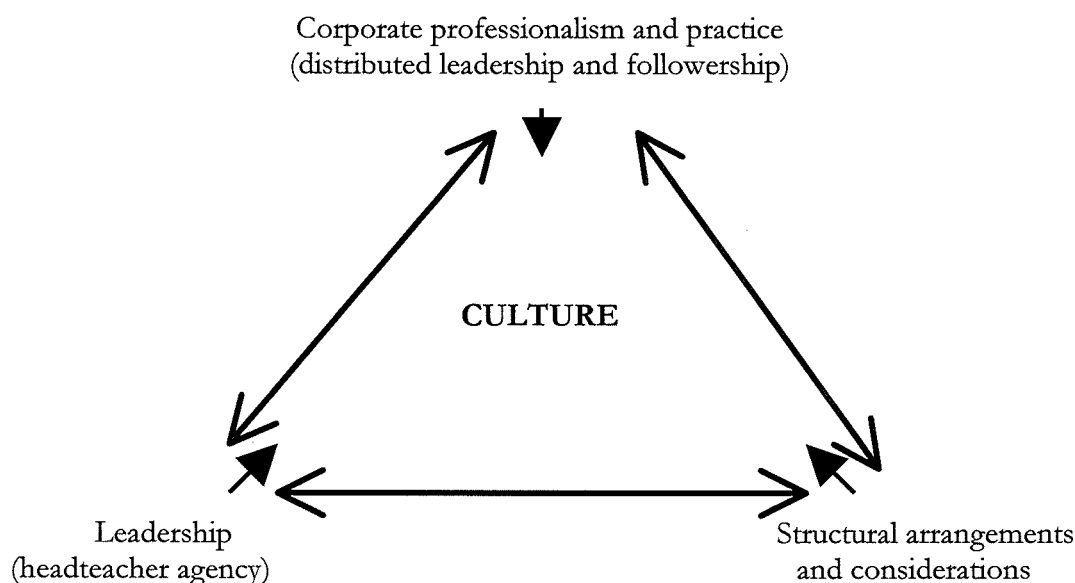
leader and leadership.⁷ Grint (2003) maintains that leading is a social phenomenon, as without followers there are no leaders. With reference to the first elemental driver, followership is appended as a necessary condition for leadership, as well as being a key feature of professionalism. This serves to highlight the need for counterbalancing leadership and followership, and the need for leaders to build a 'community of followers' (Grint, 2003, p.91) to provide a consensual context in which leadership can happen. In educational settings, as in other organisational settings, there needs to be a critical mass (critical mass theory is defined later, p.119) of followers assenting to the moral and contractual right of the leader to lead.

Hence, the theoretical model⁸ configured below, represents the relationships between these constructs, the I-DEDs, as demonstrated (figure 2.1). Each operates in a dynamic instrumental in determining and maintaining the current cultural state of the school. These are not presented here in any priority or hierarchical order, although it is contended (supported by policy documentation and the theoretical literature) that the agency of leadership, the focus of this enquiry, represents a significantly potent force (e.g. OfSTED, 1998, 1999a,b, 2000; Schein, 1992).

⁷ In the models (figures 4.2, p.91, 4.3, p.117 and 4.5, p.129) the term 'leadership practice' is used as being synonymous with headteacher-leader agency.

⁸ Hargreaves (2003a) has raised the problem of using representational devices that could be prone to misleading simplicity. In this study they could inflict considerable injustice on the multi-layered complexities of meaning. Therefore, while the evident advantages of this representational device are employed, it is nevertheless real-world complexity implicit in the transmutation of cultures, and captured in the messiness of the singularity afforded through case study, that remains the essential focus of this enquiry.

Figure 2.1: A model of the I-DEDs of culture



The model (above) represents a theorisation to be tested against the empirical data of this enquiry. Chapter 4 will accordingly focus on the empirical evidence as relating to this model. The practice of leadership will then be related to the orientations as applying to schools in special measures and beyond.

Synthesising theoretical and empirical models of culture

It is now pertinent to link the empirical and theoretical work of Schein (1992) to the model demonstrating the I-DEDs (figure 2.1, above).

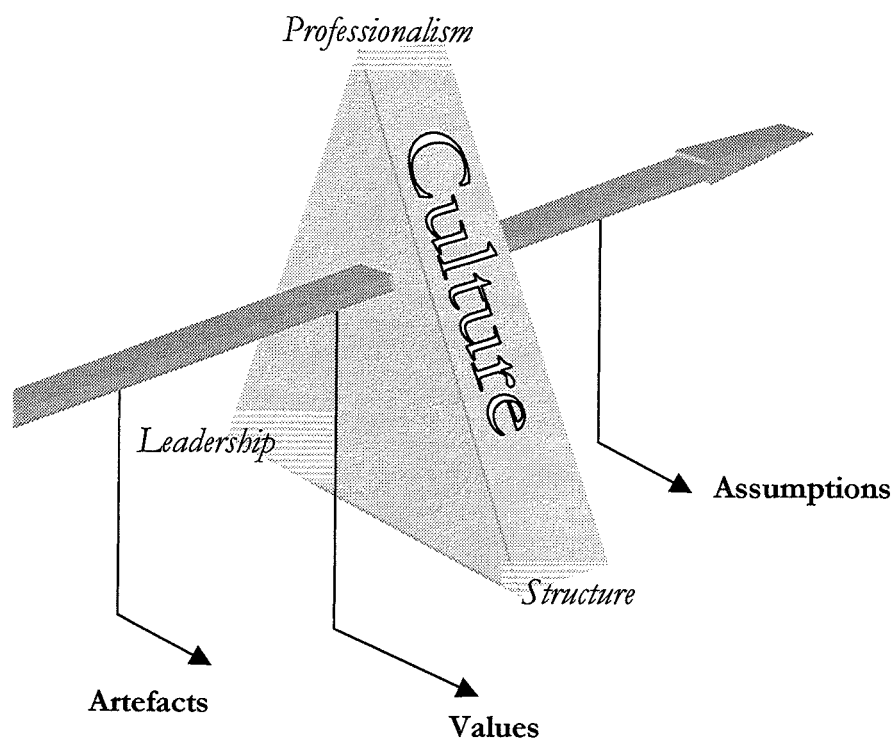
Schein's model of cultural organisation conceptualises three interrelated levels (or layers) whereby a culture may be analysed according to the degree to which the cultural phenomena are accessible to observers. The most accessible are cultural artefacts, meaning the visible products of the organisation. These include physical environment, common language, technology and products, observable rituals and emotional behaviours. Below that is a level characterised by the organisation's espoused values, those susceptible to social and intellectual validation. Schein (1992) states: 'A set of values that becomes embodied in an ideology or organisational philosophy ... serve as a guide and as a way of dealing with the uncertainty of intrinsically uncontrollable or difficult events' (p.20).

Finally, and at the deepest level, lie the basic and underlying cultural assumptions, the unconscious beliefs, perceptions and thoughts of the organisational group. Schein (1992) states: 'Basic assumptions, like theories in use, tend to be those we neither confront nor debate and hence are extremely difficult to change' (p.22). Yet it is these basic assumptions that drive organisational culture, making cultural change such a difficult and time consuming enterprise.

The premise that cultural artefacts are easiest to observe, although possibly hardest to understand, largely represents those artefacts that are sought and recognised by OfSTED during an inspection – the discernible structural features of the school. Hence it is argued that OfSTED can more easily identify them but are not able, nor would claim to be able, to represent fully and understand the nature of the deeper complexities represented in the dysfunctional cultures that they judge to be in special measures. Schein's model then serves additionally to heighten and accentuate an essential nub of the dilemma. This indicates that endemic cultural disaffection and toxicity are seen to contribute to a depth and endurance of disaffection (as indicated in Schein's model). This not only causes structural malfunction, but simultaneously and at a deeper level, poisons and pollutes the basic assumptions of the organisation, which are not in themselves readily observable and are inherently more difficult to change.

Therefore it is contented that the I-DEDs can be seen to apply in a potent cultural dynamic operating at each of Schein's (1992) cultural levels. This demonstrates that the I-DEDs are pertinent to each layer of the cultural analysis, as represented in figure 2.2 (below).

Figure 2.2: I-DEDs and the cultural layers (Schein, 1992)



Having considered this theoretical synthesis at an institutional level, the next section focuses on the school within a wider context of accountability.

OFSTED and THE CULTURE OF ACCOUNTABILITY

This section considers the broader educational culture, where accountability is practised through the functioning of the organisation of OfSTED. Aspects of the work of OfSTED present and future are explored, with special consideration given to the challenges posed by the mechanism and processes of special measures.

External culture

Organisational cultures invariably depend upon external cultures in which they are located (Dimmock and Walker, 2002). Leithwood and Riehl (2003) state: 'Educational leaders must guide their schools through the challenges posed by an increasingly complex environment' (p.2). Woods (2005) states: 'The external environment is the source of

social, political, economic and cultural influences which both constrain and open opportunities for education' (p.83).

Schein (1992) maintains there are three significant periods in the development of organisational cultures. The first period focuses on finding identity and setting values. The second, or midlife period, is characterised by differentiation and the emergence of sub-cultures. The last period Schein describes in terms of the organisation's maturity and/or stagnation and decline. He claims this point is reached when the organisation has stopped growing and adapting, and so responding in ways appropriate to the wider and external environment and culture in which it is located.

It is argued that the current social and educational culture is auditing-orientated (Power, 1997). Caldwell and Spinks (1992) place accountability as an essential element in defining the operational framework of a self-managing school. This is driven by a range of complex and demanding public accountabilities (Clarke and Newman, 1997) specifically (and pertinent to this enquiry) at institutional level, audited by a non-ministerial government department, OfSTED. Kogan (1986) maintains that institutions and role holders should be 'liable to review and the application of sanctions if their actions fail to satisfy those with whom they are in a relationship of accountability' (p.18). Multiple accountabilities are identified within hierarchies of embeddedness: the market, networks of educational institutions, interior authority (self), communal ties of the profession, and democratic values and preferences (Whitty, 2002). It is contended, from academic and policy literature, and from the researcher's own professional experience, that from the 1992 Education Act (UK Government, 1992⁹) onwards, there have been two increasingly dominant discourses within the field of primary education. These have accentuated a tendency towards national prescription and are i) performativity, and ii) managerialism or new public management (Pollard, 1999; Gunter *et al.*, 1999; Gronn, 2003). These discourses present themselves in sharp contrast to constructivist, developmental and critical orientations of learning and leading (e.g. Byrnes, 2001; Watkins, 2005) and to new forms of discretionary and extended professionalism.

⁹ Education (Schools) Act 1992. The act is introduced by the title: 'An Act to make provision with respect to the inspection of schools and with respect to information about schools and their pupils'.

Hargreaves (2003b) postulates an emerging apartheid of school improvement, this being between 'professional learning communities' and 'performance training sects' (pp.184, 186). The first is focused on learning and professional discretion and the latter on the use of management control in performance and contractual pressure. He maintains that for schools in disadvantaged socio-economic localities, the dominating and ubiquitous eye of performance observation (Perryman (2005) links the disciplinary power of inspection with the work of Foucault – a 'mechanism that coerces by means of observation' with a resulting tendency towards the 'normalisation' of behaviours (Foucault, 1977, p.170)) means they are destined to remain hostage to the latter approach. Hargreaves (2003b) states: 'The emphasis throughout is on providing the pressure and support to train teachers intensively in a limited number of given instructional priorities that will deliver rapid and significant increases in measured learning performances' (p.187). Gewirtz *et al.* (1995) state: 'This (debate) can represent, within the polarities of its domain, points of considerable tension between those who make and legislate for policy and those who are the practitioners in the schools' (p.9). It is therefore within a culture of performativity and managerialism, and its attendant and consequent accountabilities, that OfSTED is located.

OfSTED: the organisation

OfSTED was established by the UK government in 1992. It was the first element of a 'parents' charter' designed to inform and empower citizens by, in this case, providing more information. Coleman (2005) states: 'The OfSTED system of inspection in England and Wales is regarded as an important aspect of Government policy in relation to what is generally considered a new public management agenda' (p.154). The original remit was (although now extended):

The regular inspection of all schools by independent inspectors; public reporting, with summaries of reports for parents as users; an annual report to Parliament, and the provision of advice to ministers (Matthews and Sammons, 2004, p.14, - an evaluation of OfSTED's work, commissioned by OfSTED).

OfSTED claims to have introduced transparency into the inspection process, one element of this being the availability and publication of inspection frameworks and associated guidance. These have undergone a series of modifications to meet changing

circumstances. Reporting on OfSTED, Parliament's Education and Employment Committee stated: 'The (School) Inspection Framework was widely praised in evidence to our enquiry as a valuable tool for school development and evaluation' (cited in Matthews and Sammons, 2004, p.22). Since OfSTED's inception three cycles of inspection have been completed. This has resulted in one of the largest longitudinal databases of qualitative and quantitative educational information. From its inception successive governments have supported, encouraged and indeed championed OfSTED's role (UK Parliament, 1999), and despite criticisms, the public face of OfSTED remains confident. HMCI's message to the independent inspectors in 2003 described OfSTED as 'a world class inspection system' (address to OfSTED contract inspectors, London, 2003 (non-HMI contracted by OfSTED to lead inspections)).

Nevertheless, there have been critical voices and debate aplenty, not least those focusing on the validity of the results of the inspections themselves (Ritchie, 2001). Cullingford and Daniels' (1999) evidence (from the secondary sector) indicates that 'year-on-year they (OfSTED inspections) lower standards' (p.66). Shaw *et al.* (2003) suggest from their evidence that inspections have no positive effect on secondary school examination achievement. However, evidence of a causal link is extremely difficult if not impossible to establish. Matthews and Sammons (2004) examined evidence of the impact of inspection on school performance. They concluded that 'well managed schools and those that cause concern are the most likely to benefit from inspections' (p.5). They further state:

Some researchers and policy makers have assumed that it should be possible to demonstrate a causal link between inspection and improvement. This evaluation argues that such expectations may be too simplistic. While there is much evidence of improvement in quality and standards of education, it is rarely, if ever, possible to attribute causality with certainty in the study of social and educational processes. Where disparate evidence points mainly in the same direction, however, it is reasonable to infer a general association between the inspection stimulus and quality improvement outcomes, even though the intervening processes function in different ways and at different levels of effectiveness (p.18).

In a discussion of social complexity (chaos) theory, Fullan (1999) argues that links between cause and effect are difficult to trace, as change occurs in a non-linear and unpredictable manner. He states: 'paradoxes and contradictions abound, with creative

solutions arising out of the interactions that occur under conditions of uncertainty, diversity and instability' (p.4).

The perceived impact of inspections on confidence and consequent morale in schools has also been questioned. In defence, OfSTED (supported by MORI, 2003) claim: 'The proportion of schools which regard their inspections and their findings as fair and accurate, outweighs those that do not by at least ten to one' (OfSTED, 1998). However, the claims still abound regarding the effort expended in relation to the returns gained (e.g. Jeffrey and Woods, 1998). Winkley (1998) reports untold stress, stating that:

The stress of the experience for the teachers and perhaps especially for the headteacher is exceptional – so exceptional, indeed, that it has to be asked whether it is ethically acceptable in a mature democratic society (p.41).

This is a charge OfSTED has seriously sought to address through an incremental process of lessening demands and shortening the length of notice for inspection. However, it must be recognised that this stress can never be entirely alleviated. Coleman (2005) states:

An external evaluation may lead to improvement by virtue of being a "wake up call" or by endorsing existing knowledge about the school, but it may also undermine the morale of staff, possibly leading to decline rather than improvement and almost always to a post-inspection "dip" in morale (p.165).

Special measures

Of the critical voices, perhaps the most contentious have focused on the process for dealing with schools in difficulty, specifically through the procedure of special measures. In OfSTED's first 10 years, 1288 schools were placed in special measures, of which 892 were primary (Matthews and Sammons, 2004). The authors state: 'there is no doubt that most schools improve markedly following a period of being subject to special measures ... some develop innovative and successful practice which puts them at the leading edge within their LEA' (p.41). Conversely, of these schools, 93 were closed and a small proportion (15 schools) made subject to special measures for a second time. The most recent figures, published on the OfSTED website, show that of the 285 schools and units in special measures, 156 are primary schools, as at 31.03.2005 (OfSTED, 2005).

In the first instance OfSTED designated schools in this category as either 'failing or likely to fail to provide an acceptable standard of education' (OfSTED, 1995, p.15). Later these sub-categories were replaced by the designations of 'special measures', 'serious weaknesses' and 'underachieving' (OfSTED, 1999c, p.14). Interestingly, although the literature includes considerable material exploring theories and perspectives on leading successful primary schools, there has, until more recently, been less about ineffective schools, including those in special measures (Reynolds, 1998). Reynolds offers the following reasons. The first is that researchers have been preoccupied with understanding success, rather than failure, in an effort to counteract the de-schooling literature of earlier decades. Second, researchers display unwillingness to damage inter-professional relationships and self-confidence through focusing on professional failure. Third, there is reluctance on the part of ineffective schools to take part in research. Fourth, there is a tendency to back-map the characteristics of effective schools onto ineffective schools, a process that can fail to recognise the salient features of ineffectiveness. This situation has, begun to change in the recent past, as previously indicated (see p.14).

Perhaps the least accepted element associated with special measures, an aspect of the transparency mentioned above, has been the policy of 'name and shame'. It is commonly claimed that this ignores the complexity of the situation, causing the potential for a downward spiral, often resulting in considerable numbers of resignations (Whatford, 1998). OfSTED have published reports representing guidance concerning schools in special measures, with considerations for their removal (1998, 1999a, 1999b). The publications indicate the priority these schools hold in the popular educational psyche. However, it may be contended that the reports present an uncritical and technically positioned approach to recovery, one that is not sufficiently predicated on the obdurate nature of the complexities of cultural change. Similarities of the causes for placing schools in special measures have been identified as: underachievement and low levels of attainment; high proportions of unsatisfactory teaching; and, ineffective leadership (OfSTED, *ibid.*). Gray (2000) also explored the common features of schools in special measures. He cites a key word search showing that while curriculum failures predominated in the first round of inspections (1995-1998), the second round was dominated by issues connected with a lack of monitoring. This, however, could be linked to OfSTED directives communicated to their inspectors, these themselves representing

the then current national pre-occupations. There are, nevertheless, three salient and all embracing features that predominate (and represented in the cases in this study): standards, teaching and leading (Gray, 2000).

A significant question remains: How can current inspection methodology and process support efforts to overcome structural and social inequalities? In focusing on inspection as a school improvement strategy, a number of commentators express concern regarding a lack of consideration of the impact of the social context of schooling (Thrupp and Willmott, 2003). Thrupp (1999) claims improvement researchers often ignore that encapsulating the culture, the 'social mix' of the school. It also remains a question as to the extent to which the process recognises the complexities of cultures of ineffectiveness. Concerning school improvement (and inspection process), Hopkins (2001) states:

There tends to be an undifferentiated approach to schools of varying socio-economic circumstances (Lauder *et al.*, 1998). Little account is taken of culture, context, socio-economic status, catchment areas, the trajectory of improvement or indeed of all independent variables. It is only recently that the field has recognised the need to take into account contextual factors in selecting and applying school improvement strategies (p.16).

Gray (2000) reports that an obvious contextual characteristic of schools in special measures is a tendency for their being located in areas of social deprivation – two-thirds of the total number. Stoll and Fink (1996) identify the notion of the 'cruising' school (p.85), often located in affluent areas and usually camouflaged by apparently high standards (compared with national averages) and considered effective until judged otherwise through inspection. Hargreaves (2003a) contends that schools in affluent locations can tend to ride in the successful slipstream of their high-achieving pupils. Gillborn and Youdell (2000) state: 'It is time this level of activity was refocused towards the achievement of social justice' (p.222). Gewirtz (2002) claims that until recently OfSTED's documentation contained little regarding social justice, although OfSTED would now refute such claims. The organisation maintains that its purpose is based on the moral imperative of ensuring better life chances for children (DfES, 2003). Matthews and Sammons (2004) maintain that special measures designation has been unfairly applied to schools serving the greatest areas of disadvantage, and they report that now the overall

trend is against this happening. These assertions need verification as more schools are placed in special measures, especially as new inspection arrangements begin to take effect.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has considered aspects of the theoretical and policy literature through leadership orientations that help to build a clearer understanding of the specific 'empirical field' (Brown and Dowling, 1998, p.141) – a field determined in the research question on p.17. It has particularly focused on leading cultural change, beginning specifically in schools deemed to be in difficulty and failing. From analysis of the literature, and through synthesis of the researcher's own professional experience, a model has been presented that explores the nature of the relationship between leadership and culture, and demonstrates other significant I-DEDs in cultural determination. This model will be employed and tested during the empirical stages of the study. In order to provide a broader context, the chapter has also considered the role of OfSTED as located within an external culture of accountability. It has looked especially at the status of special measures, to inform the reader of the background to each of the case studies.

The next chapter focuses on the construction and the activation of the research.

Chapter 3

Methodology, research strategy and methods of the enquiry

INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the process of the research. It explores an appropriate methodology, explains the sampling, and introduces the methods used. There is discussion of the research strategy and a presentation of the ethical considerations. It explains ways in which the analysis is effected, and explores the levels of analysis employed. The final section considers how the case studies (appendices 7-13, pp.173-238) were compiled and presented.

RESEARCHING THE ENQUIRY

I embarked on this enquiry by defining a research question that was expressed as (p.17): **Through the experience of special measures, and subsequent recovery, how does headteacher agency influence and regenerate the formulation and transformation of culture in primary schools?**

This question was formulated in the realisation that my findings would express only a partial or simplified version of the full complexity that ultimately constitutes the totality of that seeming reality (Wengraf, 2001). The question has been investigated through literature review, documentary search and complex, constructive and active interviewer–interviewee collaboration (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995). These collaborations have sought to facilitate purposeful reflection, the accommodation of contextual shifts and the encouragement of reflexivity by all headteacher participants. The purpose of this dialogic process, fundamentally recognising participants as active in meaning-making (Wengraf, 2001), has been to capture the perceptions of a selected and selective group of primary headteachers. These are those who have led schools through and beyond the demanding period of special measures.

In many respects this study may be regarded as constituting ‘insider’ research (Griffiths, 1998, p.125). This emanates from my experience during the course of the enquiry, placing me within the selective institution of those fulfilling the post of headteacher of a primary school under special measures. This has had a profound affect on the formulation of this research, in effecting the enquiry and in analysing data. Hence from the outset it has been

important to recognise researcher reflexivity regarding my position, interests, understanding and values (Lincoln and Gubba, 1985; Griffiths, 1998). The experience has, nevertheless, helped provide me with opportunities to locate and gain access to appropriate research sites necessary to carry out this enquiry.

The question has been addressed through a process of thematic exploration. The themes of the interviews (appendices 2, p.164; 3, p.167) being drawn from:

- former and current professional experience;
- previous study of theory, in EdD essays and assignments;
- empirical enquiry through EdD studies;
- personal experience of primary headship (particularly the headship of a school in special measures);

and, as the study progressed:

- the literature review;
- pilot study.

Sample

The nature of the research question and the depth and scope of the enquiry has necessitated the sample being purposive in composition and relatively small in number. The study focuses on the leadership of seven primary headteachers from three LEAs, all of whom have led schools subject to special measures. They have, furthermore and significantly, led them for a period of time beyond that.

Initial selections of headteachers were made from lists included in the annual reports of HMCI (OfSTED, 1999d, 2000, 2001). Using the criteria below, a list of possible participants was compiled. Applying the criteria and exploring current improvement data produced six prospective participant headteachers (one for pilot interview and five for

LEAs were also contacted, and this produced another two prospective headteachers for case study. Approaches were made and agreements for the interviews sought. All participants were made fully aware of the nature, purpose and scope of the study, as well as the research protocol. In making the final selection, specific regard was given to the following criteria:

- headteachers of primary schools mentioned in HMCI's reports as having made 'substantial improvement'. This judgement is predicated on schools having been removed from special measures by HMI;¹⁰
- geographical location (proximity to home and IOE);
- time in the school (at least six terms as headteacher);
- schools where the researcher had not carried out significant professional consultation or professional development;
- LEA process for the categorisation of the effectiveness of schools: gained through the LEA advisory service;
- the availability, willingness and capability of the headteachers to take part in the research.

The headteachers in the final sample may be divided into three distinctive groups. The first group are the headteachers who were 'previously incumbent' and whose leadership actions may have been cited as a cause of failing (e.g. headteachers A and E). The second are the 'newly appointed' headteachers who had taken up posts shortly before the school's impending failure (e.g. headteachers C and F). The third are the 'parachuted' headteachers, those who were recruited after the inspection to rescue a failing situation (headteachers B, D and G). (Gray (2000) identifies that a difficulty of researching in schools in special measures is that they are frequently compounded by changes of personnel – a tendency following failure.) In the sample two of the headteachers proceeded to occupy the post of headteacher in a second failing school, although in both cases they were successful in removing their original schools from special measures (headteachers A and F). In each of the cases the second interview was held during the occupancy of the second post. This

added breadth to their contributions, especially in considering the models presented as part of the focused interview (appendix 3, p.167).

Methodology

In an earlier EdD enquiry (Walker, 2001), research questions were pursued through recognising the need for representing and employing a range of authentic practitioner voice/s. This study sought amplification of the concept of authenticity by maximising, through interview and discussion, the process of learning from and with selected headteachers. This aimed to produce a faithful representation of their situated understanding of agency while seeking to link experience to a broader theoretical and conceptual framework. This present study challenges and enquires into the veracity of existing theories of school leadership, especially for schools in special measures. It seeks to generate, where relevant, propositional ideas to extend the current theoretical framework. Essentially the study pursues understandings of personal identity and practice in ways that allow for exploration of individual and collective agency. This occurs while resisting oppressive knowledge and practices, and without returning to the modernist idea of the autonomous subject. Nevertheless, it does construct meaning on that which some determine as being the inherent dangers of the subjectivity of perception (Giddens, 1976), here maintaining that that very subjectivity is an important determinant in creating the seeming objectivity of the social world. For what people actually feel about the world will affect not only what they think, but also the way they subsequently act.

Earlier I argued (Walker, 1999, 2001) that in interpretative research the natural scientific relationship of 'subject-object' gives way to one of 'subject-subject', signifying a relationship where the academic and professional knowledge of formally educated people acts in dialectical tension to produce profound understandings (Reason, 1998). Based on that tension, this enquiry requires a deep and theoretically robust understanding of the nature of the interplay between agency and structure (specifically in this study, the relationship between leadership and culture). This study therefore draws methodologically on fundamental theoretical notions of a 'hermeneutically informed social theory' (Giddens, 1982, p.6) – Giddens' theory of structuration. This approach represents 'an

ontological framework for the study of social activities' (Blaikie, 1993, p.69). One significant theoretical dilemma postulated by Giddens, and one of particular relevance to this enquiry, is the relationship between the force of individual (agency) and the force of systematic routines, or constraining and enabling features of society (structure).¹¹ In other words, it is about distinguishing between deterministic and voluntaristic theories of social human behaviour. Giddens (1982) maintains that social actors are both capable and knowledgeable and that the production and reproduction of society is a skilled accomplishment by the efforts of members of that society. But he also contends that the members do this as historically located actors and not under the conditions they choose. Giddens uses the idea of the 'duality of structure' (Giddens, 1984, pp.25-29). This implies that: 'social structures are both constituted by human agency, and yet at the same time they are the very medium of this constitution' (Giddens, 1976, p.121). This means that the social structures within the equation are both the conditions and consequences or 'rules and resources' of resulting social interaction (Giddens, 1984, p.17) (a viewpoint different from the structural functionalism that postulates a more deterministic orientation (Hamilton, 1983)). The rules and conditions are the formal or informal means of generating expected behaviours whereas resources and consequences are the materials and means that are brought to the process of production (Slattery, 2003).

So in structuration theory social actors are both capable and knowledgeable, still liable to act out of habit and familiarity, but with the propensity to act differently and give reasoned accounts for those actions. They have the power and freedom to express themselves, and so, over time, change structures for the better. This indicates the importance of challenging and sometimes breaking those stereotypes, or changing the predictabilities of the ways in which school leadership should be enacted. (This resonates with earlier comments about national training programmes for headship (e.g. NPQH) and indicates the importance of challenging and sometimes breaking stereotypes of the ways

¹¹ Hence structure, building on the work of Archer (1995), may be defined as: 'the product of prior agency and the condition of current agency; the latter in turn possibly modifying structural properties which then form the conditions of future agency' (Woods *et al.*, 2004, p.448). Moreover, Archer delineates structural and agential dimensions maintaining that they both have distinct effects (Woods *et al.*, 2004) – they interact continuously and can therefore only be examined in combination 'unless one distinguishes between the

in which school leadership should be effected.) Yet structuration theory is not in itself a method of research or even a methodological approach. What it provides of particular relevance to this enquiry is a theoretical position that is based on an ontology of recurrent social practices and their transformations (Blaikie, 1993). It is particularly appropriate for researching institutional life, for analysing the regularities of social practices, and for research to be 'continuously sensitive to the reflexive intrusions of knowledge into the conditions of social reproduction' (ibid., p.300).

In generating research, the chosen methodology must fit the moment and nature of enquiry. Holstein and Gubrium (1995) state: 'What one decides to study has methodological consequences' (p.73). This enquiry is broadly carried out within the interpretivist paradigm of social science research and therefore has a research design driven by a commitment to dialogic and collaborative enquiry. In essence this is rooted in the belief that the social world has already been, and is being, interpreted before and as the social scientist arrives (Blaikie, 1993). This represents a paradigm in which researchers strive to interpret the world in the terms of its social actors. Blaikie (1993) states that for interpretivism, 'the social world is the world perceived and experienced by its members, from the "inside"' (p.176), and the task of the social scientist is to discover and describe this 'insider' view.¹² The researcher has previously explored and reflected upon the ontological, epistemological and methodological implications implicit within the interpretive approach in more detail (Walker, 2000, 2001); here further discussion is limited as applying to the demands and requirements of this particular study. The approach is therefore one whereby layers of understanding have been interpreted as the process of research progresses. Hence everyday concepts and meanings provide a basis for a social interaction, about which social actors give their accounts, and from which social scientific descriptions can be made and understood in terms of social theories or perspectives (Blaikie, 1993).

¹² In a journalistic enquiry, 2000 public servants were interviewed in order to construct a 'mosaic of voices': those working in the public sector, often talked about but rarely heard. It was claimed that these were the voices of people working in the public services, people who strive for 'the common good' - whose contributions remain largely unsolicited and unrecorded (Guardian 20.03.2001, p.1). The desire to create an authentic mosaic of headteacher voices lies at the heart of the methodology adopted for this study. The study

In collecting data the notion of practitioner 'voice' was employed, acting as a powerful means of constructing participant reality, and speaking with rather than for others.

Fielding (1998) states:

The very act of speaking within these kinds of context encourages an epistemic agency, a capacity to construct legitimate knowledge ... the exploration and transformation of existing discursive sites needs to be partnered by the construction of new opportunities for 'dialogic encounter' (p.7).

Indeed, during such activity these voices may prove a counterweight to the stereotypes emerging through the dominant discourses surrounding the literature of educational leadership, especially the expanding policy literature of special measures (e.g. OfSTED, 1997, 1999a,b). This results from the contention that headship is not susceptible or reducible to a universal theory or model of leadership, but is essentially value led and contextually specific (Day *et al.*, 2000).

Hence, during the enquiry, dialogic and semi-structured encounters were enacted through active and in-depth interviews (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995). 'Depth' is described by Wengraf (2001) as the constituent of an interview that seeks to generate a sense of 'how the apparently straight forward is actually more complicated, (and) of how the "surface appearances" may be quite misleading about the "depth realities"' (p.6). The study recognises headteachers' voices as being important in these respects, through exploring how they have shaped and evolved their practice within the institutions of their failing schools. This reduces the tendency for formulaic solutions to misrepresent, unduly, the reality of the practice of leading recovery. However, the fact that interviewees are reconstructing events in retrospect has to be considered (Wengraf terms this as an 'evolutionary narrative', constructed by researchers as 'the biographic-narrative-interpretive-method of case history' (p.285)). This is especially so when that perspective is one of a successful outcome.

Therefore (and as previously stated regarding interviews (Walker, 2001)), such encounters must be mindful of the following considerations outlined in the work of Lincoln and

LeCompte, cited in Fielding (1998, p.7).

- educative for participants;
- educative for the researcher (counter-hegemonic);
- encouraging partnerships facilitating 'double description' and 'double consciousness';
- encounters that have the potential to change, in the researcher and researched, more than the aspects of the enquiry.

These points were borne out in the course of enquiry.

It must, however, be recognised that in any research it is essential for the researcher to be reflexive about the collection, selection, presentation and analysis of data; for this remains an inherent criticism of the subjectivity of the case study approach (Bassey, 1999; Yin, 2003). Texts, and other data from which case studies are constructed are inevitably seen through the author's viewpoint of pre-determined interests and pre-conceptions, although this can be minimised by authorial self-inspection for conscious bias or subjectivity (Geertz, 1973, cited in Southworth, 1995, p.54). In a former enquiry (Walker, 2001), the researcher found it to be an imperative to adopt rigour in the process and protocol, hence not going beyond evidence of the data – an ever-present possibility in more casual forms of enquiry.

In performing and recording the overall analysis, the fact that only headteacher perceptions have been collected may camouflage potential inconsistencies in narratives and accounts of experience. The fact that accounts of other significant agents within institutions (e.g. deputy headteacher, teachers and teaching assistants) are not heard could mean that the enquiry is failing to highlight the existence of internal paradoxes. This study, however, seeks to explore indicators of psychological and philosophical discourse within headteachers, for these in themselves may form the motivational force of individual change and growth. An important and significant feature of these case studies is that they are bounded by the recorded perceptions of the respective headteachers, forged in conjunction with the researcher. Essentially the concern here is not with reconciling multiple realities at institutional level (as for example, the headship research by Day *et al.*, 2000). Instead the concern is with explaining (on an individual level) and balancing

Research strategy

This sub-section considers the strategy of case study. In the research this is used not as an end product, but formatively and as part of the process of enquiry. The cases were compiled as one part of a three level analysis – the second level (figure 3.2, p.75). They are provided as research artefacts for further empirical activity and deeper analysis.

Stake (1995) describes case study as ‘the study of the particularity and complexity of the single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances’ (p.xi). This strategy was chosen in order to focus on, and explore, selected instances dealing with the subtleties and intricacies of complex educational actions (Denscombe, 1998) within a conceptually defined boundary (Stake, 1998).

Stake (1998) maintains that case study is not a methodological but a strategic choice, made with regard to that which the researcher chooses to study – the social phenomenon that is the focus of enquiry. It is the study of the instance in action (MacDonald and Walker, 1975) and the study of a bounded system. It must, however, be noted that this strategy is one that has already provided a good deal of the current data about schools in special measures (Gray, 2000). This in itself could be a limitation by presenting an unbalanced picture, as ‘albeit unintentionally ... schools that have improved rapidly or, alternatively, hardly moved at all may become unduly prominent’ (ibid., p.13). However, this study explores the institution of headship from an insider’s viewpoint. The aim here is to produce dense or ‘thick descriptions’ (Geertz, 1973, cited in Stake, 1998, p.97) of leading through the episodic journey of special measures and beyond.

Different commentators have employed different and sometimes competing terminologies and definitions for case studies. This research draws eclectically from those definitions and as appertaining to the study’s intentions. No definition appears wholly adequate, although each is illuminating as to the overall purpose of the enquiry. Stenhouse (1988) defines ‘ethnographic’ case studies that focus on ‘the apparent understandings of the actor/s in the case and offers from the outsider’s standpoint explanations that emphasise causal or structural patterns ...’ (p.49). Yin (1993) names ‘descriptive’ case studies that ‘presents a complete description of a phenomenon within its context’ (p.5).

expressed as a claim to knowledge. Stake (1995, p.3) defines 'instrumental' case studies that examine a particular case in order to gain deeper and more generalisable insights into the issues. All these definitions may be applied in this study, although what is important is that each case acts 'as a mid-wife to perception' (Eisner, cited in Southworth, 1995, p.51), providing the basis for analysis, theorising and even generalisation.

Nevertheless, while a main advantage of case study is the opportunity for exploring detailed complexities within the singularities, there is an inherent problem resulting from the universal imperative to search for generalisations. In the natural sciences, findings are usually regarded as mutable against certain boundary conditions, whereas in the social sciences generalisations are restricted by time and space. The researcher has previously discussed the problem of generalising from case study (Walker, 2001). Here it was argued that researchers should pause before making huge leaps predicated on small (or even large) amounts of data. Stake (1995) states: 'An ethic of caution is not contradictory to an ethic of interpretivism' (p.12). In analysing and providing plausible interpretation from case studies, researchers are not able to seek 'grandes generalisation' but could reasonably offer assertions or 'propositional generalisations' (Stake, 1995, pp.7-8). Bassey (1999) employs the concept of 'fuzzy generalisations' (p.12), maintaining something may happen but without measure of its probability or certainty. Often these will be tentative and specifically located within the case studies, although they may refer, and prove valuable, to wider populations. The research is, therefore, conducted in the light of the apparent 'paradox of case study research', living with the consequent ambiguity that could reveal the unique and the universal (Simons, 1996, p.36). To some extent, the degree to which those generalisations can be formed will be the responsibility of the reader of the research. The responsibility of the researcher is to provide transparency that helps the reader consider the implications across-the-board (Denscombe, 1998). Stenhouse (1988) maintains case study is more concerned with producing examples upon which the reader can exercise discretionary judgement, this in itself being a hallmark of extended professionalism (Barnett, 1997).

In this study, each case study embodies a narrative of leadership in particular circumstances, so as to endeavour to construct the deeper connections and meanings

existing theoretical formulations which in turn are used to formulate a new basis for further theorising. Hence this enquiry adopts the notion of 'analytic generalisation' (Yin, 2003, pp.32-3). Here researchers attempt to translate and, where desirable, generalise findings from their cases to broader theoretical structures, thus contributing to the wider educational debate within this field of enquiry. Hence, although it is not possible or desirable to generalise with certainty from such a small sample, some tentative generalisation will be formulated.

Methods

The tools and techniques for collecting data were:

1. Context proformas: to provide personal and factual background to the cases. These were used to collect information on matters such as qualifications, experience and other biographical details of the headteachers. This was compiled after the pilot interview had been completed.
2. Documents: for search and analysis. These were used to provide first level analysis (also used in second and third levels for checking and cross referencing) (the levels of analysis are introduced on p.69) so forming a basis on which to formulate a guide for the semi-structured interviews. Documents included: OfSTED report; school's post-inspection action plan; monitoring reports by HMI; and other documents produced by the school to facilitate overall development and improvement. These included statements of aims, policy statements, action and strategic planning.
3. Interviews: held with headteachers. The overall approach adopted for the interviews was one in which the researcher collaborated with participants to activate a multi-layered oral production, accommodate contextual shifts and encourage reflexivity (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995). In earlier EdD studies, I explored the implications of interpretive interviewing, and used the approach in the interviews (Walker, 2000, 2001). It was considered that the methodology of this enquiry necessitated such an approach; one in which participants are empowered to become active constructors of knowledge and

implies that reality is an ongoing accomplishment where participants are being empowered to speak their own understanding of truth (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995).

The first round of interviews was effected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews.¹³ In the first round, interviews were formulated and lines of enquiry delineated from experience and the literature. Semi-structured interviews were thus constructed with questions sufficiently open to allow interviewer and interviewee to exploit unforeseen lines of enquiry with improvised and theorised questioning. Wengraf (2001) contends that such improvisation may account for 50%–80% of the responses arising from initially prepared questions. He maintains that in comparison with fully structured interviews the interviewer employing semi-structured interviews requires as much preparation before the session, more discipline and creativity during the session, and more time for analysis and interpretation after. The potential for an unsatisfactory result is high if the conditions and requirements of such interviewing are not met. He concludes that semi-structured interviews are ‘high-preparation, high-risk, high-gain, and high-analysis operations’ (p.5). In preparing the interviews, consideration was given to a researching conundrum outlined by Gray *et al.* (1999). This contends that data available to researchers from existing empirical and theoretical work tend to specify the production of specific questions, which in turn structures and consequently restricts the production of any new data. Prior to interviewing, a context analysis was carried out, effected through documentary search and review. This sought to determine: i) salient aspects of the situation for those involved, ii) personal meaning for those involved, and iii) affects on those involved (Robson, 2002). To assist in counteracting the conundrum outlined above, questions and questioning were used that provided the impulse for reflective conversation, without contriving to restrict the necessary fluency of re-constructive and creative thought. The documentary analysis accordingly pointed in the direction of areas and circumstances requiring further investigation. The format for the first round of interviews is presented in appendix 2

¹³ One pilot study was carried out with a headteacher who had led a one-form-entry primary school through the process of special measures. This proved to be of prime importance in testing and refining the interview schedule. It also helped to consider the range of documentation required in the efficient compilation of case studies and assisted in the formulation of the context pro-forma. The pilot provided opportunity to refine the researcher’s interviewing techniques, especially in ensuring the best use of both the respondent’s and the researcher’s time. The interview was extended but not transcribed

(p.164). The written form of the questions was offered to participants in advance of the interviews. This enabled their preparatory thinking and reflection.

The second round of interviewing consisted of 'focused interviews' (Merton *et al.*, 1956; Cohen *et al.*, 2000; Robson, 2002) which were more conversational in style. The interviews built on the analysis of the first round, and pursued issues requiring further enquiry. They explored implications of the themes emerging from intra- and inter-case analysis. Cohen *et al.* (2000) describe this approach of interviewing as being where the 'distinctive feature ... is the prior analysis by the researcher of the situation in which subjects have been involved' (p.290). Hence the researcher uses the analysis as a basis for constructing an interview schedule that identifies major areas of enquiry in order to determine further data for collection. Through this process the emerging models of the enquiry were used as a focus – these being constructed from the second and third level analysis of the empirical data collected during the first round of interviews. These formed the basis of the interviewing conversations and resulted in some important modifications and clarifications to those models.¹⁴ Hence the form and style of the second round of interviewing were significantly different but provided an important opportunity for testing the reliability and validity of the theoretical modelling against headteacher experiences and understandings. This process helped in checking understandings and in increasing the ownership of the research findings – established as important principles in the process of the enquiry (Strike, 1990, cited in Cohen *et al.* (2000) pp.68-69).

All the first round interviews were tape recorded and transcribed (except the pilot interview). To extract as much meaning as possible, aspects of Silverman's simplified transcription symbols were employed to take account of the paralinguistics or conversational analysis of the setting (cited in Wengraf, 2001, pp.216-8) (appendix 4, p.168). The scripts were numbered according to the speaker (interviewer and interviewee) and through a process of identifying units of meaning. Mishler (1986) maintains, however, that any form of transcription is bound to be guided by theoretical and practical considerations. Transcripts can only be a partial representation of meaning. Each representation is also a transformation of the event, as the transcriber makes the decisions

necessary in the conversion of speech to written form. The non-linguistic features of the event are but one example of the partiality of the process of transcription. Mishler claims that while the speech may be the 'intended object of study' it cannot claim to represent the full scope of the reality as represented by the inner state and deeper meaning (instrumentation theory) that the speech is purporting to represent.

In order to partially remedy this 'data-loss' (Wengraf, 2001, p.222), memorising notes were used during the process of transcription. In the course of the process chunks of the recorded conversation were punctuated by annotations to facilitate both second and third level analysis (identification of phases and themes) and to indicate further lines of enquiry. It was regarded as important that the researcher did his own transcribing, as this provided the opportunity to identify emerging phases, themes and operational characteristics. It was also important to locate possible areas for further enquiry and/or clarification during the subsequent focused interviews. Furthermore, it also provided a useful means of reflecting on, and consequently improving, interviewing technique; an important consideration for a professional and apprentice academic researcher.

Throughout the second and third levels of analysis, the researcher remained aware of Mishler's (1986) suggestion that 'it is important to keep returning to the original recordings to assess the adequacy of an interpretation' (p.48). The second round of interviewing was also tape recorded, although transcribing on this occasion was selective and partial. This reflected a different type of interview, one more conversational and discursive.

ETHICS

Cohen *et al.* (2000) state: 'The planning of educational research is not an arbitrary matter, the research itself being an inescapably ethical enterprise'. The authors continue that 'it should be conducted rigorously, scrupulously and in an ethically defensible manner' (p.49). The research in this enquiry adheres to the professional codes of ethics of the relevant academic associations (particularly the BPS). Prior to researching in the field, the formulation of a code of ethics was considered at length, and shared with participants,

prior to their agreement to taking part in the enquiry. The code essentially conforms to one previously used by the researcher (Walker, 2001) (see appendix 1, p.162).

Participation was entirely voluntary for all, and based upon participants' formal consent. In LEAs other than my own, permission to approach and include the headteachers was gained from senior education officers. The aims of the research were fully explained at the outset and the right of withdrawal, at any stage during the procedure, ensured and understood. Permission was sought, where necessary, from senior education officers. No monies were paid or offered to the participants. The right of anonymity was guaranteed through substituting a letter for each headteacher (e.g. headteacher C). Confidentiality has been maintained at all stages of the enquiry, particularly as participant headteachers remain, and will continue to remain, in the researcher's professional world. It must therefore be morally and professionally necessary to maintain confidentiality after the process of research has been completed, and uncompromisingly into the future.

Chapter 2 has already raised the issue of using, from the outset, conceptual frameworks of culture and leadership derived from the literature and professional experience. While this was understood and explored by the researcher it was not initially shared with the participants. This situation was compounded as the conceptual frameworks were developed through the second and third levels of analysis. The dilemma is focused on the possibility of compromising transparency and trust between researcher and researched. This potential difficulty was seemingly overcome through two stages of revelation. The first was during the focused interviews, where concepts were shared. The second was during feedback of the overall findings at the conclusion of the research.

Of particular relevance to this enquiry has been the issue centred on the recognition that individuals themselves are socially and emotionally constructed. They, in turn, will interpret themselves in relation to their perceptions of power in their social relationships. Bentz and Shapiro (1998) stress the problem of seeking and conversely misrepresenting truth in a 'power-saturated environment' (p.42). During the enquiry, the first round of interviews were held at the time the researcher was leaving his post as an LEA inspector/adviser and consequently serving notice en route to headship. This position

respondent claimed that he would not have been so candid had the situation been different.

By the time of the second round of interviews the situation had significantly changed. The researcher had returned to a more senior post in the LEA in which he was formerly employed. In recognition of the potential for difficulties and compromise he felt it necessary to renegotiate right of entry to the empirical sites. Even at this stage he was fully prepared to withdraw from a particular case and reconsider his strategy. However, all respondents unequivocally stated they were fully reassured by the code of conduct and the integrity of researching thus far. They were consequently convinced of the separation of the LEA and researching roles. This was especially reflected in the actuality of the second round, which although predicated on the first round, was significantly different in scope and aspiration and provided opportunities for sharing models that were being applied across all the cases involved.

During the course of the research all the interviews were held in the participants' schools, an important consideration regarding the perceptions of power.

Finally, consideration was given regarding the limits and boundaries of ownership, gaining access to the report, and the giving of consent and rights regarding publication. The researcher has articulated and stated a written position regarding his rights concerning the analysis, findings and conclusions of the final report. The report will be lodged in the Institute of Education library and as such available for public scrutiny. The researcher, as author, has reserved the right to publish the research within the strict guidelines of the protocol outlined in this section and in appendix 1 (p.162). This would be carried out after consultation with the participants. Participants were assured that they would know the outcomes of the research, even though this could present problems associated with the unexpected nature of the enquiry.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

This section moves from research design to the process of data analysis. It demonstrates how a large amount of relevant data was incorporated into the three empirically derived phases and their respective themes – important in understanding the issues of this enquiry. This arrangement has been used for a more penetrative analysis, and forms the basis of the structure of chapter 4. An outline of the chronology is presented in figure 3.2 (p.75).

It is generally contended that analysis in naturalistic research is an ongoing and progressive process (Skrtic, 1985; Holstein and Gubrium, 1995). Skrtic identifies three levels of analysis, each dependent on the other; so generating and fermenting a deeper and ongoing understanding. In consequence, a similar analytic process has been here adopted and adapted, modelled on Skrtic's notion of the graduation of levels, as detailed below. It should, however, be noted that to some extent the second and third levels of analysis were not carried out linearly, but rather as a parallel or concurrent processes. For the purpose of clarity these have been described below in the chronological form of steps. This may be further illustrated by figure 3.2 (p.75) showing the route of the research as relating to the levels of analysis. Although appearing linear, closer examination serves to demonstrate that the research is multi-layered, multi-directional and more cyclical in process.

First level analysis (prior-case analysis¹⁵)

Analysis was carried out through:

(Step 1) Searching and reviewing literature relating to schools in special measures

This enabled a broader understanding of the field of enquiry to be channelled into specific areas of enquiry.

(Step 2) Reviewing and analysing documentation relating to each case

This provided greater understanding of each school's situation and that which headteachers faced and were facing. It prepared the ground for conducting the interviews in the light of a broader conceptual field and to gain context-specific understanding. In turn this fed into the compilation of a schedule for the semi-structured interviews. This enabled a fuller exploration and sharing of formative ideas relating to each headteacher's role and its implications.

Second level analysis (intra-case analysis occurring through researching data within the specific boundaries defined by the individuality of each case, with some preliminary inter-case analysis)

Analysis was carried out through:

(Step 1) Transcriptions of the first round of interviews

Glaser (1978) highlights the importance of theoretical memos during the act of transcription. This is accentuated by Wengraf (2001) maintaining that hearing the audio-tape for the first time evokes a flood of memories and thoughts that require capturing at that precise moment. Therefore it was important that the researcher did the transcribing for two reasons. The first was to honour promises of confidentiality. The second, as previously argued, to hear and benefit from the replaying of the tapes. Glaser (1978) states:

As (the researcher) is 'sparked' by his (sic) work, the prime rule is to stop and memo, no matter what he interrupts. If he does not, the analyst may lose the thought as his mind goes on to new thoughts and the mechanics of more coding, sorting, writing (p.83).

Hence memo writing generated a source of important theoretical ideas from moments that could otherwise have been forgotten. For embedded within the transcripts was a commentary upon which later analysis was predicated, although these tentative statements

analysis' (Cohen *et al.*, 2000, p.148). Cohen *et al.* maintain that this type of research yields huge amounts of data. Lincoln and Guba (1985) call this the process of 'unitising' (p.203). Hence these units provide broad but discrete conceptual categorisations of the material, coded in order to provide order and structure for the production of the case studies and for further detailed analysis.

(Step 2) Constructing first drafts of the case studies

These were compiled by grouping units of analysis (from transcripts of first round interviews) and by importing the relevant documentary data for each respective case. Through scrutiny of the same transcripts, and by analysis of the same documentary evidence, the case study format (or structural framework) was compiled as a basis for the presentation of the studies (appendix 6, p.171). Hence both units of analysis and documentary evidence were subsumed under respective headings forming categories of meaning, these being for further analysis upon, condensation into, and the realisation of, a consistent case study format. These presented a broad portrait or narrative of leadership for each headteacher.

Once draft productions of the case studies had been produced, the accuracy of the draft versions of the written studies was checked with respective participants. This was not only for factual accuracy, but also for a reliable representation of the active collaboration, a process referred to in the literature as 'member checking' (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.314). The cases required considerable reduction because of the sheer volume of accumulated data. This does not necessarily make theorising easier when competing theoretical positions are being considered (termed 'the principle of the under-determination of theory by facts' (Blaikie, 1993, p.70)).

Many claim that language is inherently unstable and liable to consequent slippage or indeterminacy of meaning (e.g. Derrida, cited in Sim, 1999, p.31). Such criticism, appertaining to the processes of this enquiry, has to be seriously considered, especially in seeking to ensure maximum reliability within the inevitable constraints encountered within this approach. For although accounts of social actors should provide starting points, and

state: 'That in order to be able to treat people as if they were human beings it must be possible to accept their commentaries upon their action as authentic, though revisable, reports of phenomena, subject to empirical criticism' (p.101).

(Step 3) Compilation of provisional themes and operational characteristics

Provisional themes and operational characteristics were generated (appendix 14, p.239) during the compilation of transcriptions and while the outline case studies were initially formulated (although difficult to fit within a timeline – more representative of an ongoing accomplishment). Recognising the nature of a small sample, only limited quantification was attempted. The second and third level analysis involved actively searching for the existence of dissimilarities in the perceptions of headteachers, counter-intuitive, and counter-factual findings (or deviant and negative instances). This process is represented in Popper's (1961, 1972) scientific process of falsification and conjecture, within his stance of critical rationalism. Here the researcher is not looking to prove tentative findings through selective enquiry, but rather to find discontinuities in order to explore the significant. Popper (1976) contends that objectivity may be encountered in the social sciences lies within the objectivity of the critical method.

The generalisations that are here represented are supported through links with the theoretical and empirical literature, and matched, but not directed by, my own professional experience in this domain.

Third level analysis (inter-case analysis)

Analysis was carried out through:

(Step 1) Identification of the phases of the enquiry, with respective themes

The phases and themes (derived from, although different from the provisional themes and characteristics (appendix 14, p.239)) were determined and generated from the empirical specificity of each respective case (remarkable elements). This occurred from

demanded further penetrative analysis. While earlier describing the change as ‘episodic’ (e.g. p.13), the term ‘phase’ was adopted as this conveys the overlapping and (as in the last phase) less finality. Each phase and theme was coded in the light of emerging interests and further lines of enquiry (Cohen *et al.*, 2000, p.149), termed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) as the process of ‘categorisation’ (p.203). The phases and themes as presented earlier are:

Table 3.1: Phases and themes

Phase	Theme
Dysfunctional	Failing Culture Leadership
Recovering	Action planning Culture Leadership Critical moments External agency
Recovered	Removal from special measures Culture Leadership

(Step 2) Scrutiny of tapes from the second interviews

The analysis of the second interviews employed a process defined by grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The ideas, implicit within the units of analysis and categories of meaning, were considered for elaboration and further exploration during the subsequent focused interviews. This process sought to penetrate the assumptive world of the headteachers, build on the identification of the phases and themes and test their veracity. Only after the completion of this step were the case studies finalised in order to

Step 3) Forming connections and relationships between respective phases and themes

In order to carry out a deeper and more coherent analysis, connections and relationships between respective phases and themes were identified. Hence speculative inferences were formed from the empirically-based ‘thick description’ of the cases (p.61). This presented propositional generalisations that were related to, and constructed upon, the tentative findings. These in turn were related to the broader theoretical framework of the literature review and beyond.

(Step 4) Creating theoretical models – generalisation

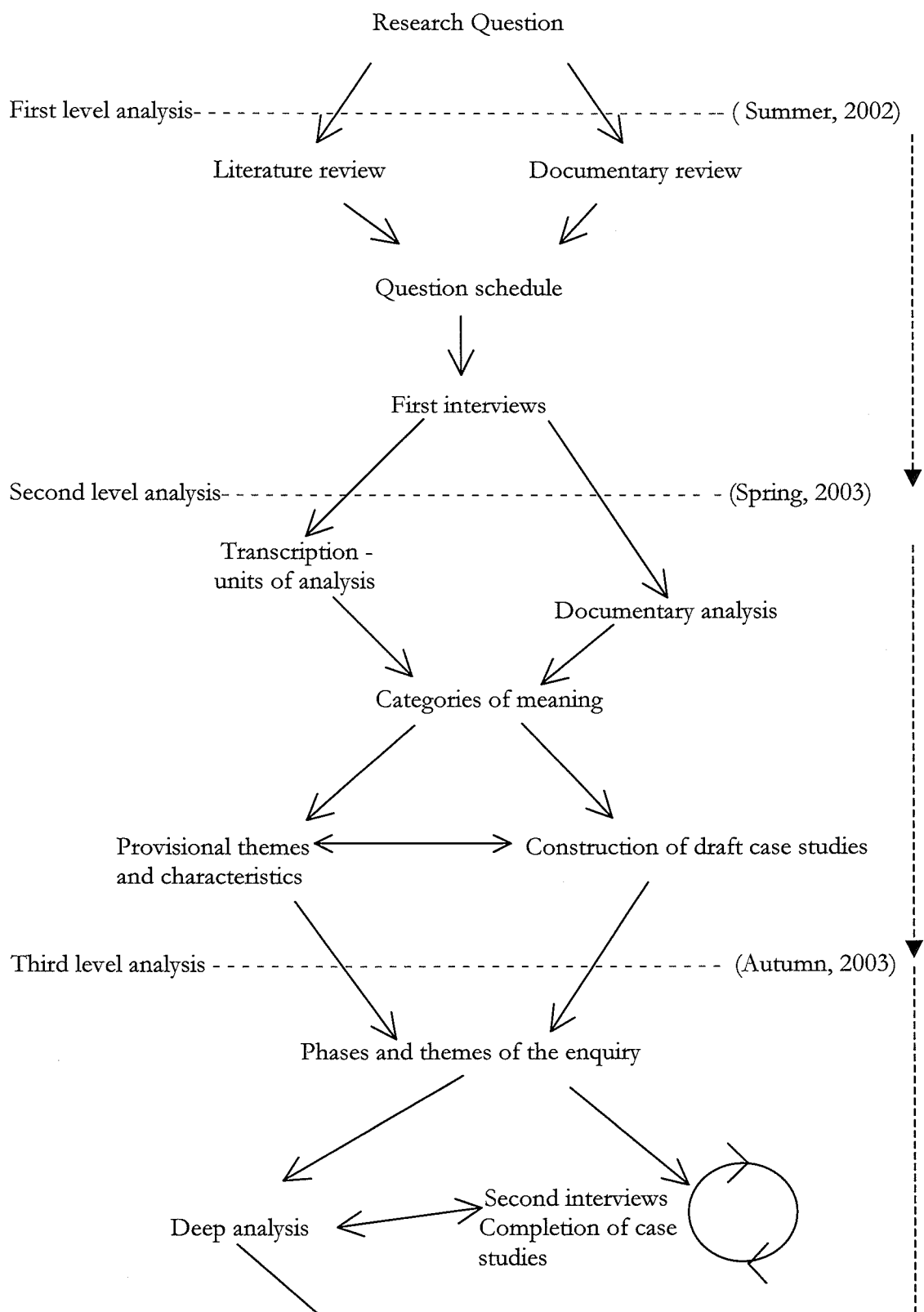
The models presented in the following chapter are constructed to represent the findings of this study.

The issues of generalisation has already been discussed.

ROUTE OF THE RESEARCH

The previous sub-section presented the route of the research. This is presented diagrammatically in figure 3.2 (below). The diagram also presents an outline of the chronology.

Figure 3.2: Route of the Research (Autumn 2001 – Autumn 2004)



COMPILATION and PRESENTATION OF CASE STUDIES

The case studies are presented in appendices 7-13 (p.173-238). It has not proved possible to include the seven studies (total words: c.26000) in the main report. Including even some would have severely compromised the amount of analytical material presented. The case studies are, nevertheless, necessary to the process of enquiry and constitute a requirement in understanding the line of argument presented in this thesis. Therefore, although not included in the main report, all are extensively referenced and directly quoted in chapter 4 and elsewhere. Moreover, the cases in the appendices are presented in a shortened form in further respect of the need for economy of wordage, although behind each is a fuller version used as research artefact.

Construction of case studies was carried out using both the language of the researcher and that of the participant headteacher. The intention has been to create commonality between studies through language and structure (using the framework in appendix 6, p.171) while using the language and phraseology of respective headteachers wherever practical to do. The aim has been to let headteachers tell their own stories through their words (where necessary the researcher has added comments or amplification in parenthesis). This is more powerful and immediate, as well as suiting the purpose of this enquiry. For these reasons direct quotation is frequently and extensively employed.

The studies, as presented, are not claiming a general representation of headteachers of failing schools per se. Rather they are illustrative of the essential diversity of the human stories that contribute to an understanding of the aforementioned complexity of failing. They should not be seen as attempting to present a representation of an archetypal school in special measures. Conversely, and in many ways, they represent important counter-factuals to common expectations (see p.72, reference to Popper (1961)), exposed in story telling and 'thick description' of the cases. This is illustrated by headteacher A stating that: 'I saw going into special measures as a positive, not as a negative. I had to some extent engineered it' (A/68¹⁶).

Schein (1992) has specifically commented on interviewing so as to promote a deep understanding of organisational culture and leadership. He states:

The basic principle of interviewing is not to ask about values or assumptions. Not only are such questions likely to produce what the informant thinks is socially desirable and acceptable, but even if she or he is not motivated just by social desirability, the informant is unlikely to be able to focus on those categories. Instead the outsider (interviewer) should ask questions that produce a natural story, that access the informant's thought and memories in such a way that they are naturally organised, that is chronologically. The best way to do this is to get a historical reconstruction of how the group solved its major problems of external adaption and internal integration and to focus on the kinds of solutions worked repeatedly and became embedded (p.177).

This process has been the backbone of my enquiry.

Regarding the headteachers themselves, their backgrounds and experience varied, and base-line statistical data is presented in appendix 5 (p.169). Something held in common by the headteachers was a willingness to be reflective on experiences. Headteacher E states:

By the time you get to the end of your career ... then you'll be able to see and make some kind of sense of it. I'm beginning to make some kind of sense of it (E/1).

The headings used for each case study are based on those that evolved during the course of enquiry. Direct quotations have only been shortened where expedient to do so and by removing superfluous words and comment. Due care has been taken to ensure that meanings were not altered or changed. Full transcripts have been produced in an accompanying volume to this study and, although not presented for examination, are available.

There is one more consideration to address, the issue of the macro- and micro- levels of understanding and research. These are distinguished by Gronn (2003) through the terms of the 'architecture' (p.7) and the 'ecology' (p.71) of leadership: policy (and conceptualisation) and practice respectively. The micro he defines thus:

the point at which policy-required roles and subjectively defined professional identities meet. Here, structure is realised through the acts of agents and, recursively, agents have an impact on structure through their words, deeds and emotions. For these reasons, practice represents an accomplishment, the outcome of both the intentions of agents and the unintended consequences of their actions (pp.3-4).

Micro-level factors are, however, insufficient to explain the work of leaders who are constructed and positioned by macro-level factors. These factors are not of their making and largely beyond their control (Gronn, 2003, p.82). Such levels and distinctions are therefore implicitly recognised and explicitly addressed, at relevant points, through the course of this enquiry. Indeed the adopted methodology for this study has been expressed by Gunter *et al.* (1999) as seeking to present professional accounts that have 'a role in illuminating the connection between the micro-context of lived experience and the macro-political, ideological and structural dimensions in the construction of the headteacher's practice and identity' (p.xi).

CONCLUSION

This chapter has identified an interpretive approach as appropriate to the question driving the enquiry. The research is driven by a commitment to a dialogic and collaborative approach, capturing a tapestry of headteacher voice. Methods for the collection of evidence include documentary analysis and semi-structured interviews. The sample is a purposive one, representative of headteachers who have led schools through and beyond special measures. Using the strategy of case study, the seven headteachers have shared their accounts of special measures. The enquiry is one that has set out to be counter-hegemonic, employing the double hermeneutic in collecting and analysing data. The chapter sets out the process of analysis of the leadership narratives. Through the early stages, three phases of special measures were identified. Each incorporated themes common to each phase, those of leadership and culture. Each also has specific themes, particular to that phase.

The next chapter considers the analysis of the empirical data of the enquiry.

Chapter 4

Analysis: exploring the phases and themes of the enquiry

INTRODUCTION

This chapter reports the analysis of the empirical data of the enquiry. This is presented through the three identified phases of special measures. Each phase focuses on the themes of culture and leadership, and further themes necessitated by the nature of each respective phase. The chapter considers the theoretical model postulated earlier (figure 2.1, p.42). This explores the relationship between leadership, represented by headteacher agency, and organisational culture explicit in and to each phase. The phases are designated by a phase descriptor:

- first phase, dysfunctional;
- second phase, recovering;
- third phase, recovered.

A theoretical conceptualisation of headship is offered, based on school context and circumstance. The study attests to the contention that school improvement demands root and branch transformation if it is to be sustained (Hopkins, 2001; Hargreaves D., 2003).

The phases and cultures of the episodic journey of special measures

In order to set the scene it is first necessary to clarify the relationship between the two cultural types, A and B, and the three phases: the dysfunctional, recovering and recovered. This forms an essential thread of the argument, based on empirical evidence and presented through the course of this chapter. The relationships are demonstrated in figure 4.1 (p.82) – positioning culture types A and B. The precise distinction between culture type and phase is also clarified later in the chapter.

The chronological beginnings and endings of phases are indicated in figure 4.1, although evidence suggests that precise moments on this journey are difficult to identify. The special measures journey is represented in a phased continuum, punctuated by particularly significant events, or critical moments, of failing an inspection and removal from special

the recovering phase does not necessarily begin immediately after the inspection, but may equally have already begun by the time of the inspection (e.g. headteachers C and F). During this phase the school moves seemingly down a single or narrow pathway. This process administered by a linear chain of command from HMI and headteacher to the staff and support staff of the school. This occurs from the moment of unfreezing (failure and aftermath) through an intensive period of structural and consequent professional reconstruction. It continues to the point where freezing can again re-establish the culture (when culture type B can be said to be successfully embedded, although this, as will be demonstrated, is far from a precise moment in time). The representation also shows the gradual tapering of the recovering phase and the tentative beginnings of culture type B (dotted lines). This latter development is explained in the next section of the chapter and demonstrated through figure 4.4 (p.123), an abstraction of the representation.

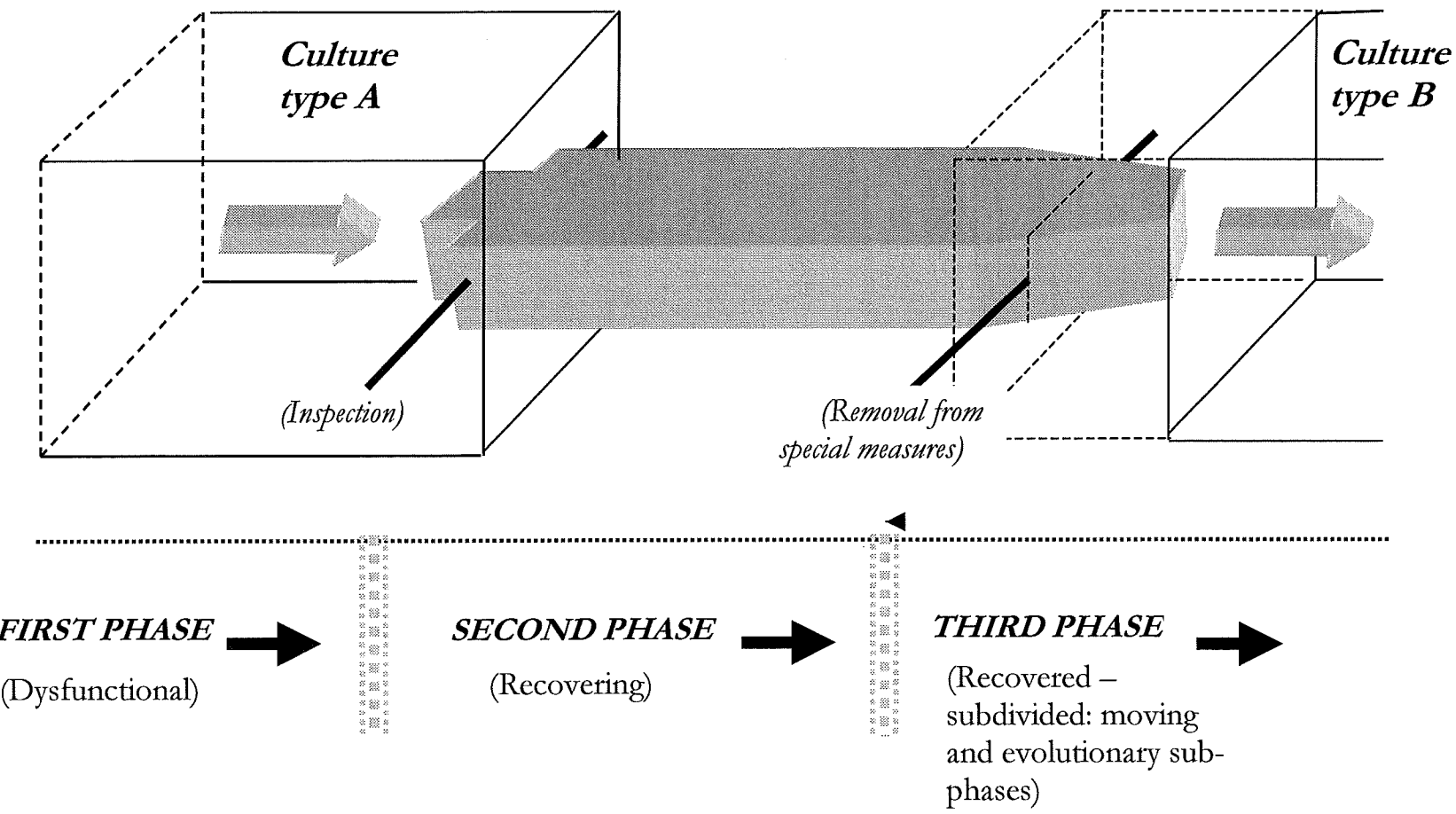
THE FIRST PHASE: DYSFUNCTIONAL – LEADING THROUGH CULTURAL DISSONANCE

The chronology of this phase is from the act of failing an OfSTED inspection and the aftermath. The themes developed within this phase are: i) failing, ii) culture, and iii) leadership.

Failing

This section begins by focusing on the precise moment of the school failing an OfSTED inspection, although different cultures of dysfunctionality, invariably pre-existing this moment, require further exploration. The process and experience of failing varied markedly between cases with some headteachers feeling powerless under the prospect and actuality of a relentless process of auditing (Power, 1997). Headteacher E likened his experiences to ‘a sledgehammer to crack a nut’ (E/35). Headteacher C felt entrapped within the process and states:

Figure 4.1: The phases and cultures of the episodic journey of special measures



(the registered inspector) saw some things that she thought oh this might be a failing school, and had her list, and went through tick, tick, tick. And then went out to find evidence to then further her cause (C/6).

Where it occurred, this approach to inspection was condemned by all headteachers, feeling it lacked understanding of the complex and challenging circumstances faced by their respective schools. Headteacher E took a different and less critical perspective, uncompromisingly placing the blame of the outcome upon himself. He states:

I think we handled the inspection process very badly. We were completely naïve ... the buzz phrase was don't go out of your way to prepare for this too much. Let your school speak for itself. I felt we had enough to speak to everybody, and we didn't. We didn't play any kind of games at all and if anything I've learnt from the whole process (it) is I'm a master games player (E/71).

Headteachers' attitudes to failing varied markedly between cases (e.g. headteachers E and F). The commonality of respective reactions was found to be located within the productive use, and transformation of, the inspection experience. Some headteachers were adamant as to the injustice and inaccuracy of the experience (headteachers C and E). However, headteacher E had resolved these feelings by the time of the interviews whereas headteacher C remained resolute as to the lack of integrity and credibility of the process.

Pugh (1998) likens the process of being placed in special measures to passing through stages of bereavement and loss. In this study participants readily (without prompting) employed the terminology of bereavement (a similar reaction also found by Nicolaidou, 2005). Headteacher E states: 'It was like bereavement, my whole life had gone really' (D/60). Kubler-Ross (1970) has empirically identified six stages in the bereavement process. The first, denial and isolation; the second, anger; the third, bargaining; the fourth, depression; the fifth, acceptance and the search for meaning; and finally, hope and internalisation. This process was reflected in the process described by the participants. For example, headteachers C, G and B state:

As soon as she told me it was special measures I went into a state of shock. But then it's a bit like a bereavement, you get on with it don't

I've got to get on with it, I've got to organise this, I've got to manage people and I've got to put on a brave face (C/37-39).

There was intense denial by everybody from staff to governors. This was not right (G/26).

Oh, yes I was very angry. And the staff was angry, they were very angry (C/41).

Parents were very, very angry, parents were very angry ... there was so much anger it was unbelievable ... (B/26).

Headteacher E, referring to gradual acceptance and internalisation, states:

I've got there now, trying to, I don't know. I think we've put it behind us and now this is an opportunity to try and actually make some sense (E/60).

The notion of resolution is taken up by OfSTED (1999a), identifying the 'first steps' on the road to recovery. They state:

Restoring individuals' self-confidence, particularly among teachers and pupils, is crucial. Schools which recognise that they may experience emotions akin to grieving and take steps to cope with the feelings of bereavement have taken the first steps that will help to secure the school's rebirth ... feelings of anger and resentment slow the process of recovery unless they are dismissed quickly. Morale can be damaged for a long time if the staff indulge in retrospective apportioning of blame (p.6).

Nevertheless, the cases show that gaining a forward momentum needs to happen rapidly.

Headteacher F maintained that schools should not:

hide or appear ashamed, because of the children as much as anything else; and that's the other important bit how you deal with the children about what is going to be said about their school and about them, in the public domain (F/85).

Shortly after failing, the same headteacher dealt with the matter in a school assembly,

would say, now and then, “am I helping”, which to me was wonderful, because it meant that inside they did care’ (F/90).

Parental and community reactions to failing differed markedly, in accordance with social-contextual factors (notwithstanding a small and unrepresentative sample). Headteacher F (from a disadvantaged locality) states: ‘It sounds really daft I know, but they didn’t really understand what it meant’ (F/76). This reaction contrasted significantly with headteacher E’s account, where parents had to be persuaded not to ‘march on Whitehall’ (E/66).

Similarly, parents in headteacher A’s school were equally incandescent, although this represented a tirade against the inspection process rather than against the headteacher, governors or staff. While managing parental reaction was frequently an issue, managing the contraction of pupil numbers was not. After the inspections, parents, by and large, maintained faith in the schools, keeping their children on roll, although in one instance there had been a steady haemorrhaging of numbers prior to the inspection (headteacher D). In one case (headteacher B), the headteacher readily encouraged parents to remove their children in order to reduce numbers and so improve playground behaviour.

Culture

Schein (1992) maintains that all cultures have to survive and adapt through coping with the realities of the external environment (discussed in chapter 2). Also they must manage their own internal integration, a process Schein regards, in a healthy organisation, as being interdependent. The accounts from the cases reveal that while one setting self-reported as representing a reasonably internally integrated school (headteacher E) in all others a state of dysfunctionality appears to be the norm. Furthermore, all the schools were out of kilter regarding the demands and expectations of most external accountabilities, this often being compounded by an unawareness of their predicament. Headteacher D states:

I think there was an element of complacency. The school had an excellent reputation for many years.... I think there was also a lack of reflection that meant that people inside the school really hadn’t seen that standards had changed; and I think that some teachers were certainly in denial about what was happening (D/22-25).

The school had had a turbulent history. Just prior to that there had been a long established headteacher who had been at the school for about 11 years. ... I think the school had gone into decline over the past two years in terms of it being complacent. The headteacher had left, the deputy headteacher had taken over as an acting headteacher for a term before I was appointed ... But the relationships between the staff had been fractious and fraught, before I came, and there wasn't much of a feeling of a team. The culture of the school wasn't warm and friendly and developmental. It was quite a hard-nosed sort of culture really (C/16).

There was certainly a lack of any form of self-evaluation. I don't think the school really looked at its own performance in any way. I don't think it was able to compare itself to what was happening around in other schools or nationally. I don't just mean performance data, I mean how people were approaching teaching, how children were learning. I don't think there was a culture of reflection in the school (D/22).

From these accounts and others, the question that needs addressing is: Can you generalise that which constitutes a failing school? As stated earlier, each situation is unique, a view generally supported in comments made by headteachers regarding some schools being further into the actuality of failing than others. This is expressed by headteacher A who states: 'If you see special measures as a continuum, I think we were closer coming out of it than being right down at the bottom' (A/17). The study previously alluded to the evidence from the literature as to the causes of failing, now it turns to the empirical evidence of the enquiry. This reveals the following six characteristics as being significant in placing schools in special measures and thus contributing to the culture of a failing school.

First, schools were caught, albeit reluctantly, in a state of 'instrumental rationality' or reason (Habermas, 1984, p.366). This defines effectiveness in terms of delivering goals for those in power (Myerson, 2001) and resonates with the previous discussion of technical-rational forms of leadership in chapter 2 (p.21-25). In this state, the school's dynamics are acted out within an orientation and practice of top-down or imposed change and school improvement; or indeed in resistance or denial of that change and improvement. This lies in contrast to forms of 'communicative rationality' (Habermas, 1984, p.398). The latter, it may be argued, forms the foundation for achieving a higher degree of institutional

is more associated with bottom-up and self-generated orientations of school improvement which are explored later.

Second, there was a lack of vision or sense of direction, and by implication, a lack of forward momentum for the school. Headteacher C speaks of a lack of vision and ‘coping on a day-to-day basis’ (C/95) (contrast Schein’s (1992) model of inter-relating cultural levels). Headteacher A reflects that (before she was headteacher):

We didn’t discuss where we thought we might be in three or four years, or anything that like that. No shared vision if you like. I felt I was working in a vacuum (A/15).

Third, difficult personnel issues were left unresolved and festering. Headteacher C states: ‘Schools are about human beings and the dynamics and relationships that go on there’ (C/119). Damaging professional relationships lay at the heart of these cultures. In some situations the headteacher was reported as being the perpetrator of this negativity, rather than the recipient. Headteacher B maintains that staff were ‘demoralised, there was low esteem, they had been bullied by the previous headteacher ... they were very distressed’ (B/20). Headteacher A states: ‘There was a complete breakdown in all the relationships within the school, so it just wasn’t working in the school’ (A/17). This situation was frequently attributed to the inactivity or timidity of the previously incumbent headteacher. The new headteacher’s capacity for improving the situation was seen as essential for gaining forward momentum. Headteacher G states:

I know that what the HMI want is (that) where there are problems still existing in school, they want to actually physically see that you are dealing with them appropriately. You will walk the full mile, go the whole hog, because if they have any doubts that you will not do what has to be done, then they won’t take you out of special measures (G/23).

Fourth, there was lack of institutional self-awareness through self-evaluation (exemplified above, headteacher D). The schools had lost sight of the seriousness of their respective predicaments through losing their grasp on external demands and expectations – argued in chapter 2 as being an essential feature of cultural cognisance (p.44-46). Headteacher G

Fifth, pedagogy was always a cause of failure and therefore represented in the key issues of all the cases. Such judgements were both explicitly and implicitly linked with the headteacher's leadership, an indication of OfSTED's demand for instructional leadership from headteachers (OfSTED, 2003). Headteachers A, B and E comment:

I had too many poor teachers. I just couldn't move fast enough. In terms of quality of teaching, when I became head there were probably six failing teachers and they were the same teachers that were failing (by the time OfSTED came) (A/19).

So if there was one pressing cause of failure it was teaching and learning, and that was having an impact on the whole culture of the school (A/26).

Few members of the school community had any idea what the quality of the teaching and learning looked like – they were somewhat bewildered by the verdict (B/20).

They (inspectors) said the quality of teaching wasn't strong enough, and the quality of the children's work on a day-to-day basis wasn't good enough and I think that that is probably right (E/29).

Headteacher A reports that she colluded with the inspection team, agreeing that she and the deputy headteacher would teach in order to reduce the number of unsatisfactory lessons (85% by the end of the first day of inspection). She states: 'I took the line there is little point in crucifying us; I could take failing, but not on that level' (A/72). It seems evident that influential and confident headteachers are able to endeavour to engineer inspection processes and outcomes.

The cases demonstrate a tendency for teachers to lose the academic focus of their teaching, with some evidence of a narrower focus on personal care. Nias (1989) demonstrates that an ethic of care can too easily become central to the classroom enterprise, to the exclusion of more rigorous teaching (although this is contended by others, e.g. Hopkins, 2001).

The last and sixth characteristic was a contributory factors to all those above. Being

others. In almost every case this was attributed (supported by inspection documentation) to the incumbency of the previous headteacher, either at the time of (headteachers B, D and G) or prior to the inspection (headteachers A and F). In one instance (headteacher E) the headteacher admitted to having significantly changed his leadership practice after the inspection. In all cases there was a limited concept and scope of leadership, largely focused on one person endeavouring to act in the capacity of heroic leader (discussed in chapter 2) and accordingly becoming reconstructed as anti-hero (Southworth, 1995). The evidence of this enquiry indicates that this phenomenon occurs when headship agency is negative or in retreat. There develops a power vacuum that allows others to provide alternative leadership (Hargreaves and Fink, 2006). Only in some cases were low standards of achievement and/or poor progress a focus of inspectorial attention (e.g. the school of headteacher A).

In conclusion to this section, the empirical evidence shows that the dysfunctional phase is underpinned by a harmful and damaging culture (described in recorded comments at the opening of this section, pp.85-86). The evidence serves to contribute to a definition of culture type A (figure 4.2, p.91). This may be further described as a negative culture of professionalism in terms of debilitating conduct and practice. In some cases it presents an emotionally abusive working environment (e.g. headteacher B) within an intellectually limited and protectively inward-looking climate (e.g. headteacher F). Perkins (cited in Fullan, 2005, p.24) refers to 'regressive interaction' (poor knowledge control and weak social cohesion) a feature describing this culture. It may feature cultural fragmentation with conflicting and counter-productive subcultures (Hargreaves, 1994) (e.g. headteacher G). Reynolds (cited in Learmonth, 2000, p.76) maintains that one 'pathological characteristic' of the ineffective school is the 'dysfunctional sets of interpersonal relationships' formed around cliques and friendship groups.¹⁷ Accountability is also inevitably ill-considered and confused with some schools seeing themselves as being largely outside that process and requirement. Deal and Peterson (1999) maintain that some schools develop 'toxic cultures' (p.118) (term also employed by others, e.g. Fullan, 2003b) which actively work against improvement. The schools described in this study accorded with this cultural description. Deal and Peterson claim that members of staff

resist reform and publicly ridicule those who want to try new ideas. Such cultures, they contend, can destroy staff motivation, dampen their commitment, depress their efforts, and so change the focus of the school. They claim that where this happens there is a decrease in learning, frustrated growth and the fostering of radical individualism rather than collegiality.

Moreover, the evidence shows relationships with external educational culture and opportunities for supportive intervention were frequently fractured and fractious. Relationships between schools' organisational cultures and the external educational environment, and additionally the prevailing societal culture, were unhealthy, and often hallmarked by professional incompetence (e.g. headteacher A). As previously argued, culture may be seen to exist at multiple levels with a distinct lack of cultural coherence in the consideration of inter-relationships between cultural levels (Dimmock and Walker, 2002). This in turn allows for the survival of the organisational culture in only a tentative, fragile and temporary sense, one creating its own inward-looking coherence (Hargreaves and Fink, 2006). The study demonstrates that for these schools the inspection event instigated massive intellectual, social and emotional dissonance as the external reality engendered through the process caused the educational and societal world to break through (Whatford, 1998).

Leadership

Central to addressing the question of this study (p.17) is an understanding of the relationship and interplay between leadership and culture (see earlier discussion on structuration theory, pp.56-58). In the earlier model (figure 2.1, p.42), a theoretical construct was postulated demonstrating the dynamic embedding of headteacher leadership, alongside the other I-DEDs, in determining the overall cultural state of the school. So returning to that model an empirical modification is presented as applying to culture type A (described above). This model (figure 4.2, below) represents a self-perpetuating cultural dynamic of inherent weakness and ultimately a cultural dynamic of failure.

Figure 4.2: Culture Type A



The cases reveal the nature of leadership offered within this culture type. This is hallmarked by fractured and dysfunctional headship more often facilitating crisis in the school's followership. However, which is cause and which is effect is not open to generalisation (even where this can be determined). It can result in leadership that is over-directive in its negativity or leadership that is timid and ineffective. The leadership is too easily susceptible to professional confusion, representing little engagement with the complexity of contemporary headship. It provides consequent recourse to naive forms of uncertainty within the limitation of a closed and self-perpetuating system modelled above and could be described as dissonant and ineffectual. It is, finally, leadership that is situated in its own fatalistic assumptions of passive acceptance (Schein, 1992), driven and not driving, as demonstrated in the competing I-DEDs of dysfunctionality.

The headteacher agency may here be further empirically illustrated by the relationship existing between pedagogy and the headteacher agency of the case study schools. Southworth (2004) identifies learning-centred leadership as an essential component of successful leadership practice. Yet extremely limited instructional leadership had been given by headteachers, and in some cases this was completely absent (e.g. headteachers B and G). In contrast, during the period of inspection the newly appointed headteachers

Headteacher F recounts that her school failed because of a 'lack of structures and I think really, leadership in the previous few years' (F/67). She reports that this resulted in teachers being unable to teach because pupils' behaviour would not allow it to happen, although despite this 'they remained so positive and so enthusiastic and committed' (F/18). Likewise, headteacher C bemoans a lack of structural arrangements impacting on the cultural climate of the school (C/95). In one school, the professionalism of staff was being compromised by their actions, for example, in asking selected parents to keep their children at home during the inspection (headteacher F).

Nonetheless, there was, at this stage, self-reported evidence of strong and decisive acts of leadership, this occurring in leading schools through the inspection and the immediate post-inspection period (e.g. headteachers B and F). However, these came from headteachers who were not themselves responsible for creating conditions of failure ('parachuted' or newly appointed headteachers). Their attitudes were hallmarked by a resolve to transform the experience and rise from the ashes of special measures. Hence, for them, this point indicates the beginning of recovery.

Finally, in summary of the arguments in this section, the characterisation of leadership within this phase may be termed: leading through cultural dissonance.

THE SECOND PHASE: RECOVERING and LEADING COUNTER-CULTURALLY

The chronology of this phase is from action planning, the statutory period of special measures (usually around two years¹⁸), until removal from special measures. The themes

¹⁸ Following a school being placed in special measures there is a two-year window for closely monitored and supported recovery. Schools are required to produce an action plan (within 40 working days) for the approval of OfSTED, this being subject to grading. Each school is given a link HMI. Matthews and Sammons (2004) maintain that the starting point for improvement is the interaction between HMI and the headteacher. The authors report that most headteachers valued their support and challenge, although a minority felt some criticisms unjustified. However, they also state: 'Headteachers were unanimous in

developed within this phase are: i) action planning, ii) culture, iii) leadership, iv) critical moments, and v) external agency.

Action planning

In every case, the evidence of this enquiry shows that being placed in special measures is followed by a period of intensive and frenetic planning for recovery. The headteachers present a rich account of the process of action planning. They demonstrate, however, that often the plans did not have the ownership of the school community, but tended to be produced by non-classroom-based personnel (including LEA staff) and presented to the rest of the teaching staff completed. In the cases of 'parachuted' headteachers this was often carried out without sufficient contextual understanding of the school. Headteacher D states:

It was very difficult for us because we (headteacher and deputy headteacher – both acting) had no real picture of the school at that time ... we literally had to write the action plan in our first ten days here. We had no experience; time was running out, the 40 days were nearly up (D/60).

The danger was that plans simply became artefacts, one-offs to fit the crisis of the moment (headteachers B, D and E). The plans themselves were generally ambitious in scope, top-down in manner and not always grounded in the reality of the situation.

Headteacher C states:

The action plan had to take over ... we then had OfSTED top down, top heavy, here you are, this is what you need to do now and this is how you've got to do it, and this is the model that we want. Suddenly we were railroaded (C/28).

Governors were not necessarily involved in the complexities of the process, not many regarding themselves as equipped to take the role. Headteacher A states:

Basically I did all the main bulk of it with (AI) and then they (governors) did things like read it as a group and tweaked the odd

The action plans were formulated at times of high turbulence in the schools, with conflicting demands being placed on headteachers in situations of heightened complexity and emotion (headteachers A and D). Sandbrook (1997) postulates, from empirical evidence, the notion of 'post-inspection syndrome' (p.47), the period immediately following the intensity and anxiety of the inspection. This can be a disabling time even in a 'healthy' school and Sandbrook signifies an inertia that comes from resulting short-term burn-out and consequent inability to get going once again. For schools in special measures this was a period of externally directed and highly charged intensification. As previously identified, this coincided with a time of bereavement, maximum disempowerment, and feelings of worthlessness mounting.

There seem to be two inherent difficulties regarding the demands of post-inspection action planning for schools in special measures. First it requires a timeframe not matching the post-inspection reality of the school. Headteacher C states: 'In doing the action plan I wasn't able to get on with other things back in school' (C/103). In at least three other cases (headteachers A, B and E) headteachers report compiling their action plans whilst conscious of operating within parallel timeframes of conflicting demand and complexity. Second is the difficulty of operating within conceptual frameworks having limited understanding of the cultural features needing to be cultivated if the schools are to continue beyond the point of merely recovering – in other words going beyond. This is epitomised in a published journal for headteachers. Here a consultant headteacher, assuming temporary headship of a school in special measures, states: 'I can't remember ... talking about embedding, empowering or vision. Not once. We simply concentrated on getting things done' (Aldridge, 2002, p.3). This statement represents a dangerous position of acting within the limitations of the moment. Contrastingly, Schein (1992) maintains that communication and articulation of visions are crucial in providing the condition of psychological safety that will 'launch new learning' (p.333). This is necessary if the school is to recover and thrive. Fullan (1993) maintains that teachers respond to visions as much, if not more, than to mandates. The danger exists for short-term and non-sustainable solutions being all too easily and systematically embedded at this stage of the enterprise.

The action plans that were reviewed as part of this enquiry demonstrate that headteachers

changes were: implementing performance management; creating a system of monitoring to inform improvement planning; implementing schemes of work; strengthening management teams; better use of performance data; and implementing whole-school assessment routines (examples from action plans: headteachers D, E and F). Furthermore, these plans formed the basis for the activities and responses of HMI during their termly visits. The HMI report for headteacher B's school states: 'They (headteacher and deputy headteacher) have rightly taken the lead in developing policies and procedures in order to ensure that the pace of development is maintained'. The HMI report relating to the school of headteacher D states: 'The headteacher and her deputy support teachers through their attendance at weekly planning meetings, and by providing oral and written feedback following observation of teaching'. From this evidence it seems that headteachers used their action plans to counter the cultures of their schools (culture type A) – particularly regarding artefacts, and at a structural level, instigating at this time of intensive planning, the process of unsustainable linearity. This will later be demonstrated in a model (figure 4.3, p.117).

The action plans themselves strongly focused on measurable improvements. These presented a range of non-negotiable demands that raised a further inherent danger – that this could represent a change programme focusing on partial or surface change. Schein (1992) states:

Many so-called culture change programmes actually deal only with this one element of the culture – the measurements to be applied to future performance.... This sometimes sounds like a real change in mission, but on closer examination, turns out to be merely a new focus on how to measure success. From this perspective it is clear that such new signals will change only one element of the culture. If only the results signals are changed without concern for mission, goals and means, very little actual change may occur (p.64).

Hence the issue of sustainability is raised as a concern (Fullan, 2005) for recovery directed by action plans may lead to change, although the cultural change that underpins and sustains change may be compromised in seeking only short-term solutions. This may lead to schools initially being removed from special measures, but eventually returning. Fullan

difficulty, accomplishing short-term improvements while seeking to build, and not compromise, longer-term capacity.

Culture

The moment of failure represents an intense moment of organisational trauma. This may be better understood by reference to the process of cultural change described by Schein (1992) (developed on Lewin's (1947) model, cited in Schein, 1992, p.298). Schein notes the presence of disequilibrium caused by presenting enough data that is contradictory to the integrity of the organisation. This situation has direct parallels with the situation of schools placed in special measures. The presentation of 'disconfirming data' causes trauma that leads to 'unfreezing' the system and, necessary conditions being present, eventually results in motivation for change (p.298). The first condition is anxiety and/or guilt resulting from the data (the impact of inspection on culture type A). The second is sufficient psychological safety, thus seeing the possibility of retrieving and rebuilding the enterprise without loss of 'identity or integrity'. Therefore this allows members of the organisation to admit to disconfirming data rather than defensively denying it' (p.299). Moreover, there remains the problem of those not prepared to admit to the data or the possibility of their own culpability, this particularly being demonstrated in a number of the cases (e.g. headteachers E, F and G). So once the unfreezing has occurred what does this study demonstrate concerning that which is specific to this phase of recovering? What characteristics are demonstrated under the imposed direction and, as later expanded upon (pp.107-119), the influence of the external agency? The following six characteristics are offered.

The first is the attempt at rebuilding organisational culture principally through structural change and adaptation (as required by key issues of respective reports¹⁹). Sergiovanni (2001) postulates 'connections' (p.66) as essential to building institutional community. He contrasts rational connections and cultural connections, the former being contractual and the latter covenantal. What is evident is that it may be necessary to establish the former as a means of achieving the latter. The cases in this study show that a lack of attention to the

structural fabric of the school causes negligence concerning the essential life of the school (relationships and actions driven by values and principles). Essential life is strangled by lack of necessary attention to basic systems and/or cultural artefacts (Schein, 1992). This is demonstrated by headteacher F stating: 'Because there weren't structures; there wasn't respect or anything else in the school when I arrived, it (the decline) had just snowballed' (F/20).

The second characteristic is time. The headteachers believed that their schools were required to operate a timescale reflecting the needs of external accountability rather than their understanding of their needs at that moment. Hall (1977a) identifies conceptualisations of time as a key feature in understanding cultures, accordingly devising the notion of monochronic and polychronic time (a concept later adopted by Hargreaves (1994) in differentiating local classroom time and the time of national policy makers). The headteachers were required to work to relatively short time-scales. This conception may well have considerably intensified the difficulty of some teachers in carrying out the plan conceived in such constraining circumstances. Conversely, Caldwell (2000) maintains that during this century the concept of the educational strategist will become pre-eminent in school leadership. Day (2003) states: 'All researchers point to the need for headteachers to possess qualities of strategic thinking so they remain "one step ahead of the game"' (p.172). But the evidence raises an important question, for it seems that being the headteacher of a school in special measures reduces the necessity and opportunity for this essential element of educational leadership.

Third, schools tended to be motivated by the development of 'common cause unity'. This notion is predicated on the perception of a common enemy, sometimes perceived as the representatives of the external agencies of recovery. Argyris (2000) distinguishes between external and internal commitment, the former representing the distant expert and/or common enemy. Headteacher F states: 'Everyone just pulled together it (the situation) was so extreme' (F/72). The headteachers reported teacher attitudes to external direction were remarkably sanguine. Headteacher E states that members of staff were 'very happy. They (teachers) were so willing to be told what this ideal thing we are working towards is. They were willing that if somebody knows please tell us' (E/160). This illustrates a

institutions that had for some time been struggling in cultural inertia or toxicity. In contradiction to the feasible conclusion that this process could induce mere drudgery gleaned from external servitude, headteacher E reports his deputy headteacher as exclaiming 'we were alive, it's the most alive you might be in your life actually' (E/172).

Fourth is the place of conflict. Here it is necessary to distinguish between cognitive and affective conflict. While the former represents an essential part of school improvement, the latter is more a feature of culture type A. The evidence of the study indicates that externally imposed directives, characteristic of the phase, can drive out or deflect healthy and desirable intra-school conflict (headteacher G). This directs organisational energy towards the agencies of perceived imposition (although this is not always the case, headteacher E) thus encouraging an unhealthy state of 'groupthink' (Janis, 1985, pp.168-182). There is existing evidence that conflict suppression could escalate in the longer term (DiPaola, 2003). This eventually could render the school unable to cope with, and constructively absorb, the inevitable return to conflict once the school has transformed from this phase.

Fifth, distinctive pragmatic considerations concerning staffing were frequently represented, including a high frequency of teacher competency procedures. Headteacher A undertook three such procedures simultaneously. There were also high turnovers of staffing during special measures, difficulties of recruitment once in special measures and the problem of having to accept, because of shortages, more failing teachers to replace those leaving (e.g. headteacher B). The rebuilding of staffing teams became a focus for some headteachers, at a time when it was most difficult for them to accomplish (e.g. headteachers C and D).

Sixth, in order to be removed from special measures as quickly as possible, headteachers and staffs laboured under the prescription of a narrowly conceived and externally prescribed top-down agenda for school improvement (e.g. headteacher C). This was driven by the focus and dependency on the action plan and a high reliance on external agency. Hargreaves (2003b) argues that disadvantaged or failing school communities are necessarily focused on performance training (see discussion on pp.46) and given a

those schools the opportunity to operate with discretion and critical discernment, and this he terms: 'the apartheid of school improvement' (p.149).

The evidence therefore leads to the definition of a distinctive transitional or recovering phase gestating a form of shadow culture. This is a non-sustainable stage hallmarked by externally driven, tentatively positioned and scaffolded professionalism. It is a period of challenge and heavily directed capacity building, led by action planning and directed and channelled by external agency (see pp.107-119). There is an inevitable tendency towards 'external commitment' (Argyris, 2000, p.40). While accountability is clear, it is largely focused on a single or narrowly focused dimension and externally driven and monitored by requirements of HMI. As to whether this period could rightly be described as a 'fully-fledged' culture is a question that has been considered throughout this enquiry. The conclusion reached is that it represents a phase, a distinct entity in its own right, between two distinctive and self-perpetuating cultures (culture type A (already described, pp.89-90) and type B (described pp.124-125)). As evidenced, the phase does represent aspects of a culture in terms of shared attitudes and assumptions, the norms and unwritten codes (Stoll and Fink, 2003). However, it is maintained that it is not a culture as defined above. Not least because it is not a self-perpetuating system as is essential in the dynamic of the I-DEDs of the cultural types (figures 4.1, p.82, 4.5, p.129).

Leadership

In leading through the aftermath and consequent fallout of 'failure', the headteachers demanded absolute commitment and loyalty from the outset. Headteacher B states: 'My first words to the staff were that this was going to be a very, very steep hill to climb. If they needed to go they should go now' (B/29). The evidence shows that the overall leadership approach and practice at this phase had an autocratic and directive tendency based on a strong and necessary self-belief. This contrasted directly with leadership approaches that headteachers adopted beyond special measures – including, as will be seen, the uncompromising nature of the self-belief (e.g. headteacher A). In one case, headteacher C attributed the moment of writing the action plan to a perceivable change of approach from that which she had previously adopted. She states: 'My (approach to)

going to do' (C/105). This she later expressed as an ultimatum delivered to her staff: 'sign up or go' (C/114). Headteacher G states:

My leadership (approach) was a very coercive one. Because actually although I was allowing people to access ownership if they wanted it, through good practice, the bottom line was we were going to do it anyway and everybody knew that. Because that was the way it had to be, and I think that is the strength of a head going into a school that has failed. You can't afford the time to look at something in tremendous depth, you've got to go with what you know will work, what is good, give people the opportunity to jump on board, but if they don't want to that's tough (G/126).

This description has a resonance in some aspects from the orientation of transformational and charismatic leadership (discussed in chapter 2, pp.25-30), an approach with inevitable appeal during this phase. This is further illustrated by headteacher B presenting herself as the 'lone heroic leader'. She states:

If I went tomorrow it would not be good either, because they've lost their deputy, they've lost a couple of good senior management people. If I went as well I think the school would dip again straight away (B/145).

Earlier, Schein's (1992) model (representing cultural unfreezing) was discussed. Following the unfreezing, headteachers need to set about 'cognitive restructuring' (p.301) for the organisation to survive. The evidence shows that it is during this phase that this process is happening. Stark (1998) identifies the areas of skills necessary for headteachers in leading schools through this phase. These are, strategic, monitorial, collegiate, staff-management and development, resource-management and ambassadorial. This study shows that all of these skills are to some extent employed by headteachers during this phase, although strategic skills were not as evident for the reasons already discussed. Likewise, and as seen in some cases, the development of collegiality was placed on hold.

An example of the leadership approach adopted throughout this phase may again be illustrated by the relationship between pedagogy and headteacher agency (see p.91). Hopkins (2000) states: 'it is in the confluence between expanding the teaching and

reducing the aforementioned danger of policy churn (Elmore, 2000). They saw this as being at the heart of their school improvement efforts and this was, as frequently indicated, predicated upon their own teaching ability. However, this was primarily effected through a competency-based route of rigorous monitoring and training,²⁰ with the attendant danger of leaving little opportunity for practitioner thought and discretionary judgement. The relationship between pedagogy and leadership has been explored by Gunter (2001) citing the work of Bennett (1995). Bennett outlines four conceptualisations of teaching, relating them to appropriate forms of leadership and management. His first two are teaching as labour, principally concerned with controlling teachers through predetermined standards of teaching and outcomes, and teaching, as craft. Gunter (2001) defines the second as being:

To plan for, organise and co-ordinate the work of the teacher.
Checking results and if they are not good enough then the teaching
methods are supervised (p.112).

The evidence from this study indicates that during this cultural phase teachers worked largely within the definitions outlined above. Headteachers led pedagogy through a process of monitoring for compliance and through advocacy of prescription. This form is conceptually remote from Hargreaves' (2003a) position that: 'Teaching should not be driven by the false certainties of gurus, governments, or research oligarchies but by a creative tension between commitment and doubt' (p.146). Yet it may be contended that a necessity of this phase is that headteachers seek to establish, through a process of structural change, an institutional alignment that is achievable in practical terms and at this point in the process. However, because of the limitations of imposition, the headteachers indicated that this was often being carried out at the expense of ownership and understanding (e.g. headteacher A) (Ball, 2003). Headteacher D, tellingly states: 'It was easier to improve the quality of teaching than it was to really improve the quality of learning or the standards; that took a lot longer' (D/141). Some headteachers maintained that external perceptions of the design and realisation of their pathways, through and to the point of recovery, were at variance with their preferred routes (e.g. headteacher C). However, leading counter-culturally was seen as a pragmatic expedience, not implying that

headteachers forfeited carefully determined principles. In one case, the headteacher (headteacher G) felt he was currently acting where there was potential for principle to be compromised, although this he regarded as necessary for moving the school to a position of strength. Indeed acting counter to principle was seen as a retrograde matter contravening the moral foundations of headship, which is itself, essentially, a principled activity (Day *et al.*, 2000) (argued earlier and empirically verified (Walker, 2001)).

Nevertheless, Gray (2000) identifies that headteachers generally have to practise through a tension caused by the demand for 'dual leadership' (p.23) of maintenance and change. This study shows that for these headteachers another significant form of duality was that of practising through a period dominated by action plan led recovery (see p.93-96), while operating counter-culturally and in the interests of sustainability. This involved having a vision sufficient for an alternative culture into which the then current culture would eventually transform. Schein (1992) states: 'Leadership is now the ability to step outside of the culture' (p.2), maintaining the need for leaders to remain reflective and adapting, and not letting the institution institutionalise their leadership. Giddens (1984) describes the 'reflexive monitoring of actions' (p.5) in which human agents are constantly able to think about that which they are doing and whether they are taking the best course of action.

With one exception (headteacher E), headteachers in this study, through the diversity of situation, and by intention, practice and attitude, remained, to varying extents, outsiders in their schools. Examples include headteacher B's method of implementing rigorous monitoring and headteacher G's robust approach to the necessity for staffing changes. Each in itself shows prevention of the institution institutionalising their leadership and in consequence the colonisation of the mode and manner of their leadership. But all the time they remained aware of the need to connect and re-engage their staffs with the core purposes of the school, to form and re-establish key relationships and rebuild confidence. Issues concerning the practice of power and democracy, of shared and devolved leadership, go to the heart of criticisms of the technical-rational leadership that tended to predominate during this phase of recovering. For here the study demonstrates headteacher agency emphasised at the risk of marginalising and disempowering other staff members. There was extremely limited use of distributive or collective leadership, some

merely parcelling and scattering a finite commodity. It is essentially, and conversely, moving the practice towards the amplification and densification of a critical and principled leadership.

It is important to recognise that understanding educational leadership means understanding the nature of the person in post. Southworth (1995) highlights the notion of headship as an 'occupational identity' and that the conception of self is essential to the formulation of the role. Hence the development of the person is the same as the development of the headteacher. Understanding headship is about knowing self – gendered self, emotional self and learning self. This has strong links with the orientation of critical leadership, for 'understanding educational management means appreciating the values that underpin management choices about goals and the ways of behaving in the job' (Hall, 1997b, p.313). Clegg and Billington (1997) maintain that to be a headteacher one has to be aware of personal resources and attributes, hence representation of the self and self-knowledge is fundamental to the enterprise and operation of headship. West-Burnham (2002) states: 'We now realise just how much leadership depends on the personal qualities of the leader. Moral leadership, interpersonal leadership and leadership for transformation are as much about the person as about the role'. He continues: 'transformed schools are led by transformed people' (p.31).

Personal demands placed on headteachers became a significant feature of leading during this period. Southworth (1995) maintains that headship is a 'way of life' (p.135). Gronn (2003) argues it is unreasonably demanding of the individual and his/her time. He states:

Wherever there exists evidence of work intensification, one should expect to find evidence of greedy work ... such that it demands one to be 'fully there': always attentive, alert, absorbed in and utterly committed to the particular tasks as a totally functioning, fully available, non-stop cognitive and emotional presence in the workplace (p.148).

The headteachers in this study all reported intensity in the efforts required, a demand that could not be maintained beyond a limited period of time. Headteacher B regarded the emotional impact on herself as being:

my husband didn't help. It's hard, really hard, long hours – rare that I did anything under a 75-hour week (B/122).

Headteacher F reported that after special measures there can be 'almost a slight weaning off and a re-education of yourself to a more normal, if there is such a thing, pattern of work' (F/214).

Critical moments (significant points of departure)

The cases, and associated literature, demonstrate that improvement cannot be seen as linear and predictable (Hopkins, 2001; Hargreaves, 2003a). Headteacher E states:

It was never easy there because of the nature of the school, never be easy; it always tended to be a success and a kick in the teeth, a success and a kick in the teeth. It was just a pattern like that (E/37).

During leading schools in special measures there seem to be moments of professional or personal crisis – points that help define headteacher credentials, practice and how things thereafter progress. Indeed, moments of crisis are important in embedding cultural norms (Stoll and Fink, 1996). Schein (1992) maintains that the manner in which leaders cope with crises reveals their own most significant underlying assumptions in the situation. He states: 'Crises are especially significant in culture creation and transmission because the heightened emotional involvement during such periods increases the intensity of learning' (p.237). This becomes 'a primary embedding mechanism' (p.230) in the formation and development of new cultures. Hence the manner of encountering and dealing with crises provided critical moments for headteachers to establish their leadership. It also provided opportunity for that leadership to have an impact on the dynamics of evolving a culture for recovery.

This study suggests that the most critical of critical moments is the act of failing. Subsequently the post-inspection meetings for parents were also crucial and critical moments. The meetings were sometimes hostile (e.g. headteacher A) but interestingly performed an important and cathartic experience, although frequently charged with high

The opening question was why hadn't I resigned and it went down that road for a good hour. I ought to resign as a matter of principle, irrespective of what it said about me as a person, as a head it didn't matter, I ought to go, because that's what professional people do when their company goes into decline, the leader of a company always resigns (A/40).

The local vicar had a physical fight with one of the parents in a parents' meeting afterwards. Physically he grabbed hold of a parent and was threatening him, and had to be pulled away from the parent.... it was very very charged (D/72).

These meetings were, on occasions, rescued by the headteachers themselves. This illustrates how such critical moments can, with courage and judgement, set the enterprise of recovery on a positive course. Headteacher F used the meeting to celebrate the future, present clear plans and encourage parents to be positive about her leadership, a strategy proving effective. She states:

By the time I had finished going through all the seven (key issues) and said what we'd done ...the parents could recognise it and what they could do to be involved in some of it, they said you have done so much and it is so different, just keep going (F/78).

Here the headteacher was directive and establishing her right to lead the school. Headteacher A states:

I decided that we were going to (give) a vision (statement) at the end ... I thought, I've got ten minutes to convince these people that I am the (headteacher) for this school, and I need them to walk out of this room with confidence in me. Otherwise they would take their children into private (education), and they've got the money to do that. I did my bit and I got a standing ovation. And I got something like 16 bouquets of flowers, eight bottles of wine, hundreds of letters the next day (A/161).

This example gives insight into the headteacher positioning herself for subsequent directing of the organisation – a lack of vision formerly being cited as a feature of failing schools (see p.87).

Other examples of critical incidents included headteacher F making a stand against the re-

The LEA suggested that we might be able to work with the children and the governors backed down and I went spare at the governors ... they always backed me in the future. But for me that was a very big issue ... the chair did not necessarily trust me clearly and went with what the LEA person was saying, only later to find that actually I was right ... to me that was one of those (crisis points) ... (F/34, 38).

This example demonstrates the necessity of the headteacher in standing her ground and enhancing her authority in the situation.

The identification, analysis and reaction to critical moments helps define a crucial feature of identity and development, that of making sense and meaning from the unforeseen. Schein (1992) calls it 'managing the unmanageable and explaining the unexplainable' (p.88). He claims it is here that organisations must identify and regain their ideology, the set of fundamental values that serve as a prescription for action. In cultures where such values have not been defined (culture type A) the school can become overwhelmed by circumstances at critical moments. The cases clearly demonstrate that the act of failing is a critical event of such magnitude that it can overwhelm cultural capacity to make meaning in accordance with organisational ideology (evidenced by the headteachers in their use of bereavement terminology (pp.83-84)). Hence the integration of the culture is strained to the extent that only radical transformation can restore any sense of organisational equilibrium.

For some headteachers, their critical moments concerned their personal and emotional needs. Some, but not all, suffered a serious crisis of confidence (headteachers C and E). (There may be a difference here between headteachers who were previously resident, newly appointed headteachers, and parachuted headteachers – by virtue of their relationship and attachment with the past.) As already demonstrated, emotional investment was considerable and personal costs high. The headteachers all reflected on the difficulties of the work-life balance, which they felt to be substantially more intense in leading schools in special measures. Gronn (2003) postulates the notion of leaders as 'emotional objects' (p.131) signifying the school's emotional investment in the headteacher, a concept where leaders become the psychological containers for others' emotions. James and Vince (2001) note that leaders have a tendency to carry invisible

In summary, the cases show that headteachers carried a significant burden during this recovering phase and this was a situation they sought to resolve beyond special measures. Yet in this period schools began to draw on external support and resource and it is necessary to consider this through the theme of external agency.

The involvement of external agency (effecting recovery)

School leaders face crucial choices regarding their use of time. Riley and MacBeath (2003) found that while Danish headteachers spent more time with teachers than Scottish and English headteachers, Scottish headteachers spent more time with their pupils than the Danish or English headteachers. English headteachers, by contrast, spent more time with outside agencies, managing external politics. In this study there are clear indications of headteachers investing considerable amounts of that time focused on the demands of special measures – especially those of the external agency of challenge and support. Furthermore, this status (special measures) had considerable impact on how this was happening and indeed on the nature of the interactions. These were driven by demands of the situation, thus lessening the overall autonomy of headship.

The idea that one-size-fits-all in school improvement is now seriously and rightly challenged. The literature supports the notion of differentiated and more focused intervention (Hopkins, 2001). However, some claim this is still not sufficiently predicated on schools' widely varying social-economic circumstances (Thrupp and Willmott, 2003). Hopkins *et al.* (1997) postulate three types of school improvement programme, fitting the developmental needs of different schools. These are: type 1 for failing schools; type 2 for moderately successful schools; and, type 3 for effective schools. The programme for failing schools, the focus here, involves a prescribed level of intervention based on the assumption that such schools are unable to improve themselves and have to rely on the efficacy of external agency, an assertion supported in the literature (Matthews and Sammons, 2004).

The evidence from this enquiry demonstrates that three external agents made an impact on the schools, although some, as will be demonstrated, more significantly than others.

from special measures. The third were the LEAs who supported the schools post-inspection. In this study independent consultants and personnel from HE institutions played no part in the post-inspection phase, which may reflect the fact that the schools had already begun working with LEAs and their personnel. Equally they may have operated from familiarity (the recursive nature of social interactions), the vulnerability of that moment causing them to act within rather than over and above the social structures (the mediation of structure (Giddens, 1982, 1984)).

Inspection teams

The perceptions of headteachers varied widely concerning the usefulness and validity of the process and experience of their original inspection. Headteacher F states: 'I actually feel they were extremely good ... they could see what we were up against' (F/52, 57). Headteachers B and D also regarded their inspections as fair, accurately capturing the position and circumstance of their schools at that time. In all of these cases, headteachers perceived the act of failing as an integral and necessary part of the longer-term process of recovery.

In two cases, perceptions were that inspection teams had misunderstood and misrepresented the complexity of schools' circumstances (headteachers C and E). Headteacher C regarded the team's performance as woeful. She considered that they had ignored contextual features of the school and produced a report lacking intellectual understanding and, perhaps more significantly, predicated upon a weak evidence base. She states: 'This experience made me completely and utterly doubt the system ... it was not helpful' (C/22). Conversely headteacher G maintains that his school's inspection team underestimated the gravity of the situation at the time. Another school masked the full extent of the situation by removing pupils during the inspection week (headteacher F). Myers and Goldstein (1998) state: 'In any high stakes system, it is almost inevitable that this kind of "gaming" or "playing the system" will take place' (p.182). Two headteachers reported playing the system and one saw himself in a game of 'cat and mouse' (E/interview 2). This study suggests that OfSTED's teams were not always tuned into the distinctions and subtleties between failure and success and followed the limitations of a

previous point of inspection focusing primarily on cultural artefacts, and not the deeper aspects of the culture.

Additionally, the study shows that headteachers were aware that the difference between their first and second OfSTED inspections was 'phenomenal' (headteacher E/8). This they attributed to changes in the process, driven, to some extent, by the teaching profession. However, this was not always so. Headteacher G states:

(The team) were accurate in their judgement of us, because it confirmed what the LEA was saying, plus I'd thrown up those challenges in my headteacher's statement ... But there is bull-headed(ness) on the evidence of this team ... they destroyed a teacher, who I spent two years rebuilding. They were bastards, I use that word seriously. I see no change ... (G/204).

Nonetheless, there seems to be some movement away from the concept of punishment to the facilitation of supportive intervention. Headteacher F states:

OfSTED are (a) snapshot ... where are you now. So I suppose in some ways it might be seen as slightly more threatening. But I just see it as challenging; I don't see it as threatening (F/151).

Headteacher E states:

I often think there's a very general concept now that the schools that are in special measures now, or going in now, are really being assisted and helped, and they really have very serious things that a lot of people really genuinely do have to work on (E/12).

Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI)

Partnerships with HMI were valued by all the headteachers, a view formed mostly during the process and, in one case, more in retrospect (headteacher E). Their termly visits focused on monitoring, evaluation and advice. Headteacher C states:

HMI I found very very supportive, far more realistic than OfSTED

Headteacher B judged the partnership with HMI as 'challenging, they were interesting, it was good, stimulating' (B/178). Headteacher D states: 'Actually I found the HMI visits quite supportive and helpful in terms of ... leading the school forward' (D/142).

However, headteacher G rejects any notion of equality in the partnership, stating:

You are owned by the HMI. What the HMI says he wants to see you do, and you make it your priority. If he says next time I come I want to see these four things developed and you should really start looking at this, this is what you put into the action plan (G/113).

Evidence indicates that on the first visit, following the judgement of special measures, HMI assess whether headteachers are capable of handling the task ahead. Headteacher B states: 'If she thinks you can do the job she'll help you ... if she thinks you couldn't do the job, that's it!' (B/180). The termly visit of HMI existed at the heart of the recovering phase. For each headteacher it became a focus, and motivation, for their school improvement. Each was acutely aware that their work should demonstrate measurable or observable results. Headteacher F states:

The only bit that might seem, I don't mean threatening, but a little bit more challenging ... is they are there each term to measure the impact of what you have done since the previous visit ... So by the time they've come in, which is a term or whatever later ... you should have had time, to make an impact in some areas (F/151).

Headteacher C states: 'The importance of the (termly) visit was paramount' (C/127). She maintained that HMI visits were, in themselves, critical moments. She states: 'For a week before her visit there was a feeling of notching everything up again ... the outcome was extremely important to us' (C/127). That importance was located in the affirmation invariably given to a damaged professional body, the measurement of impact being made and in the certainty of the guidance that provided a structure for further development. Of the termly inspections, headteacher F states: 'I don't see it as a check-up. I know it is but I don't see it as that. I see it as a reassurance, and, if we are slipping, or we're not doing as we should be, then they can put us on the straight road again' (F/142). Headteacher D states: 'She actually gave clarity to the direction, where the OfSTED report failed, she filled in the gaps. She gave us the specifics, she set the expectation and she did reward our

HMI visits reported in this study demonstrate two complementary agendas. First, following requirements of the action plan, and second, developing sustainable capacity. There therefore existed in the mind-sets of the headteachers the tension between maintaining and improving. Headteacher F states: 'If I had enough resource, I could have spent more time dealing with what I should have been dealing with in the normal headship areas' (F/123). The study shows that HMI promoted the importance of short-term recovery, while at the same time seeking to build longer-term capacity, the duality previously mentioned (e.g. headteacher G). Hargreaves (2003a) employs the term 'vertical complementarity', describing the process of 'embarking simultaneously on a short-term rescue plan for immediate survival that is combined with a long-term strategy for more sustainable improvement' (p.155). This he claims must be fulfilled by collective or distributed leadership. However, in this study, and distinctively this situation, the nature, formation and dynamic of the distribution is seen between external and headteacher agency. One of the characteristics of moving beyond the recovering phase is achieving a broader conception of distributed leadership, forged within the school.

Of the HMI role, Matthews and Sammons (2004) state: 'HMI have operated in a manner commensurate with a tradition long pre-dating OfSTED, encapsulated by the notion of "doing good as they go"' (p.19). In the study HMI were valued as perceptive and wise people as well as for the role they performed. Headteacher C states:

I found her (HMI) a very human person, and actually she wasn't wanting to impose a way of doing things. That's what I found the difference (from contract inspectors), she wasn't wanting to impose a style, she was actually saying (name) I don't mind how you do it or how your staff does it, as long as we see an improvement (C/119).

Headteacher C continues: 'I look back on that and think actually she was a very wise person, she knew that schools are about human beings and the dynamics and relationships that go on there. You can't impose' (C/119). Headteacher D states: 'She was a very perceptive lady. I think she probably learnt more about the school in the two days she was here on her own than four people did in four days' (comment on recent OfSTED contractual inspection) (D/144). Headteacher F states: 'She was excellent, really good ... someone I have ultimate respect for ... extremely perceptive, very astute but extremely

Two cases (headteachers E and G) coincidentally had the same HMI. Each formed a different perception of the efficacy of his approach. This is interesting to compare, especially as from the evidence he appears to have operated differently in each circumstance. In one case the HMI was described as playing a game and being 'devil's advocate' (headteacher E). The headteacher presents an interesting perspective in which HMI goaded him to respond and hence react. He employs the language of conflict describing a form of professional duelling between himself and HMI:

HMI said to me 'You won't get out of special measures by jumping through hoops', well in fact it's completely untrue, you just jump higher and disguise the hoops you're jumping through, and manipulate the games even more ... to be cynical ... by the end of it ... we were going into battle, and the inspectors were going to come out worst (E/71, 72).

He was winding me up from the beginning. Looking at it now you think, well OK that's probably him being very shrewd, him trying to get me going and trying to provoke. One of his classic statements is, you don't need to do any teaching in Key Stage 1, all your children get level 3 anyway ... those were the sort of statements that HMI were making to me all the time ... I suppose he actually taught me to argue (E/77, 79).

These comments serve to illustrate Fullan's (1999) contention: 'There is no single solution: craft your own theories and actions by being a critical consumer' (p.18). In contrast, Headteacher G states:

He is what I would call one of the few very wise people I think I've ever met. He is not a talker, he says very little, but when he does talk you need to listen. And he would ask very simple three/four word questions, then allow you to either sink yourself or prove to him that you knew what you were doing (G/19).

He would say things like ... how long do you think year 4 should have mental arithmetic lessons each week? Just simple questions like that, they clearly in ensuing conversations could become very detailed and intricate (G/21).

The HMI allowed and encouraged experimentation. Headteacher E states:

of year 3s to year 6 and a poorer group of year 3s to year 6 and a middle group, and all sorts of different people were in, and HMI came and monitored that several times and in the end made no comment about whether it was a good or bad system (E/239).

These comments demonstrate the need to attend to school context, although in the recent past this has not been the common approach. Earlier it was contended that school improvement has been based on improving management systems regardless of circumstance, an approach not necessarily focused on the change capacity of the school (see p.107). However, the problem for schools in special measures is that they may be among those that are least tuned into institutional contextual intelligence (MacGilchrist *et al.*, 2004). HMI were seen as possessing more intuitive awareness than OfSTED contract inspectors and clearly were not looking for one route out of special measures – or for the application of packaged remedies (Myers and Goldstein, 1998). HMI actions in the schools were seemingly focused on what was appropriate in the best interests of child advocacy. Children became the clients of the enterprise, an important distinction between this position and one where the school is the client. Interestingly, headteacher B makes the following point: 'I think probably the most significant feature in the change of culture in the school is that the children are now of paramount importance, whereas children were only a purpose before' (B/interview 2).

HMI were regarded as highly influential in bringing about the necessary recovery in nearly all instances. In all cases HMI played an essential function, that of providing criticism and encouragement as headteachers sustained the enterprise of recovery through acting counter-culturally. If the culture cannot or is unable to supply this function (criticism, encouragement) then the force of external agency needs to. This HMI recognised and fulfilled. However, the evidence of the enquiry demonstrates, as previously suggested, that HMI engaged in an unequal partnership borne out of status, one in which they injected 'leadership energy' through a form of surrogate leadership. This is represented in the dynamic of the model figure 4.3 (p.117). The period of recovery allowed the school to function and rebuild its structures and professionalism, albeit in a top-down and dependent manner, while the balance of power within the leadership element of the model incrementally relocates from the external agency of the HMI to the headteacher.

grasp the necessary perspectives of individual circumstances for leading change in all its complexities. If headship is about making meaning within and for a specific cultural setting, then the partnership between HMI and the headteacher, or LEA inspector and the headteacher, must be located in a two-way dynamic and be mutually facilitating. Schein (1992) argues: 'The outsider cannot experience the categories of meaning that the insider uses because he or she has not lived enough in the culture to learn the semantic nuances' (p.170).

Meso-level challenge and support

Fullan (2003b) maintains that developing professional learning communities requires proactive infrastructures effected at district/LEA level. This study demonstrates that headteachers were generally positive regarding the contribution of their respective LEAs. They instinctively turned to them rather than other agencies and in all instances the LEAs formed a significant partnership with the schools. This relationship was predicated upon the imperative of improvement and delivered invariably through the services of the AIs. Headteacher B states: 'We did work well as a partnership' (B/84). Headteacher C reports her AI as being 'extremely supportive' (C/72). Two headteachers spoke enthusiastically of the emotional support offered through LEA personnel (headteachers A and D). Headteacher A relates this specifically to an individual within the organisation, rather than the organisation itself. She states:

Although the LEA were superb in terms of their support they weren't good at emotional support and making sure that I was OK. ... I did establish it with a member of (the advisory service) that I had her telephone number and if I wanted to I could ring her up. Because what was happening was ... (headteachers were) letting me indulge in self-pity, so I was getting worse. (The advisory service) weren't asking me how I was coping with the hours, the tiredness and everything else ... You can feel yourself going down, but you can't do anything about it ... you feel like a balloon some times, you feel like you're going to explode ... (A/173-5).

However, although headteachers spoke warmly of this relationship, LEA personnel never assumed the importance and centrality of HMI once the period of action planning had

Hopkins (2001) designates the role and purpose of LEAs, HE sector institutions and other agencies as 'meso-level of support' (p.188). Fullan (2003b) postulates the notion of tri-level reform, with school, district (the LEA) and state, each acting in a symbiotic relationship to effect change. However, functions performed at meso-level are more important than the institutions currently performing those functions (such as LEAs) and in times of innovation, change and extreme challenge, the meso-level becomes increasingly important (Hopkins, 2001). Nevertheless, LEAs invariably receive blame for failure and little credit for improvement (Whatford, 1998). Gray (2000) states:

It is one of the ironies of school improvement that some of the schools which feel most strongly that they 'did it themselves' were amongst those which have been most heavily supported by LEAs who believed in 'helping schools to help themselves' (pp.24-25).

Headteacher B provided the following example from a post-inspection meeting:

Parents were very very angry and (name of LEA officer) and myself had to do a meeting to talk about the whole process, and fortunately because I was there I was able to say can we move forward please ... and that was really important for parents because there was so much anger, and it was all aimed at (LEA officer)... (B/26).

The study therefore demonstrates that LEAs gave important support in the period following failure (e.g. headteachers D and E). Equally the headteachers blamed the LEAs for a lack of awareness, and by implication lack of appropriate action, prior to the respective schools being placed in special measures in nearly all cases. Headteacher D states: 'The concern almost came a bit too late really' (D/26). Headteacher C states:

The LEA didn't have a clear picture of where the school was, because the previous headteacher ... had not encouraged the LEA to go in, and she managed to control the whole situation.... I was very angry with the LEA ... I had come to this school and stood in front of the representatives of the LEA, the governors, and put forward my vision for the school, and I felt they hadn't been honest with me. I was very, very angry. How dare ... the LEA and governors lure me to this post. I had waited a long time for headship.... I felt so angry that I had been appointed to the school and I hadn't been told what was expected of me because if I had known that I would have said "no thank you"

The study also reflects a changing role for LEAs, charged by government/s to work with schools in inverse proportion to success – this required by the LEA code of practice (DfEE, 2001). It should be noted that the cases represent a period where LEAs were operating at the height of marketisation (Whitty, 1997) and could be bought as a sold service, or not, and essentially on the terms and conditions of the school. This distanced LEAs who were sometimes unable to offer challenge to match their support. However, it would be dangerous to contend there was no culpability attributable to the meso-level, hence allowing LEAs to escape scrutiny for potential systemic failure. Fink (1999) maintains that schools should not blame themselves entirely for they are part of a wider failure that often results from the lack of early intervention by LEAs, causing more significant and traumatic problems at this later stage. There was some suggestion of LEAs compounding, albeit unintentionally, the sense of dependency and helplessness of the school. Headteacher G, commenting on efforts to improve pupil behaviour, states: ‘The behaviour had deteriorated and they put in place ... an assertive behaviour management policy, but then left a school that was dysfunctional to carry it out’ (G/64). He continues:

I found the same in planning for English, planning for science. The task force would access good professionals who would come in with the right approach, but then leave it to a school to manage, when they couldn’t manage themselves anyway (G/64).

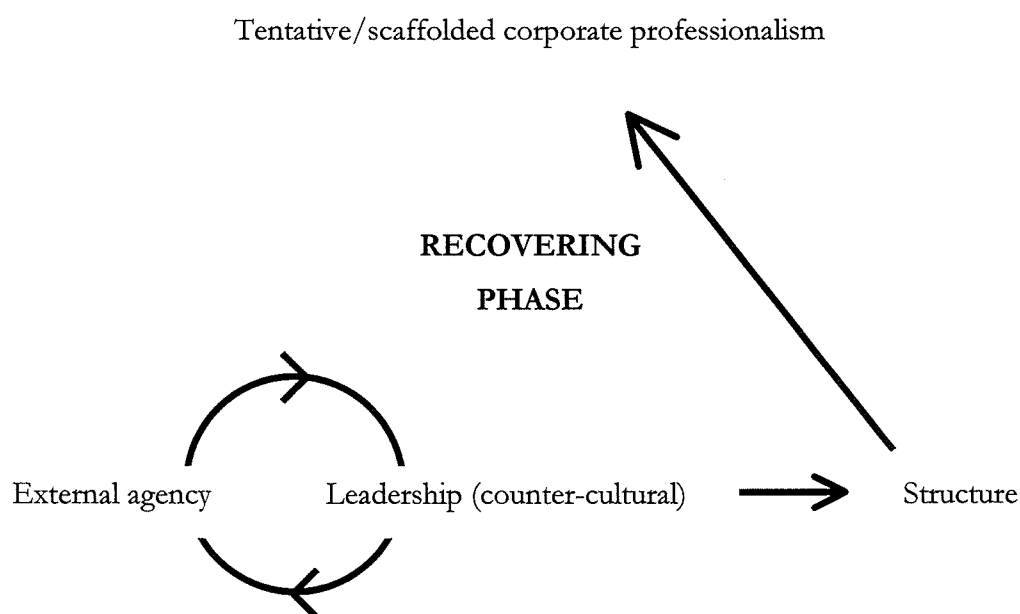
Overall, the role of LEAs was seen in a positive light, especially in providing specialist services (e.g. governor and financial) that became a significant agent of recovery and capacity building.

Interplay between external agency and headteacher-leader agency – consequent impact on culture

As argued, and demonstrated, the role of external agency is an essential feature of the phase (invariably this role as fulfilled by HMI, although in one case the LEA could be as much a part of this agency – headteacher A). So having identified principal agencies, the study now explores the relationships and interplay with the business of external agencies and how this impacts on the culture of the school. The model (figure 4.3 below)

been instigated through the interjection of inspection, resulting in a report largely focusing on requirements for structural change. Instead of schools defining and sustaining the systemic change necessary for improvement, this is essentially injected through the influence of the external agency.

Figure 4.3: Leadership in the recovering phase – the process of externally driven cultural transformation



The model therefore represents a move from the self-perpetuating dynamic of figures 2.1 (p.42) and 4.2 (p.91) to a process of externally driven change, representing a staging post (transition phase) en route to subsequent cultural transformation. It demonstrates an order of activity apparent in the evidence from the cases. The model is essentially linear, focusing primarily on the requirement to implement structural change. However, there is an exception to the overall linearity of the model as demonstrated in the relationship between external and leadership agency. The evidence shows that the symbiotic but essentially unequal relationship (e.g. headteacher G's comments, p.110) between the agency of school-based leadership from the headteacher and the agency of external leadership, generates a dynamic of leadership energy for the school. However, the model

as will be seen, culture type B shows the dynamic that re-invigorates and energises the enterprise (figure 4.5, p.129)). Conversely it is located in a process that is only sustainable for a limited period of time, determined by will and resource, as the process is not itself self-sustaining.

The model shows that this regeneration of the energy of agency is, in its turn, principally focused on the element of structural change as a matter of priority; an observation apparent in the literature (Stoll, 2003; Southworth, 2004). The overall linearity may be exemplified by headteacher C in restructuring SEN and the role of the deputy headteacher (required by OfSTED). Other examples include headteacher B focusing on changes affecting the derivation and the structuring of posts, headteachers E and F on the structural conditions for improving pedagogy, and headteacher G on the reductions of staffing levels and the attendant budgetary implications. Headteacher D states that in a position of 'absolute chaos' (D/74) the most important parts of her action plan were 'the bits which dealt with systems which we could put in place no matter what was going on' (D/82). For headteacher D this meant focussing on curriculum planning and monitoring. In each case, these priorities are driven by the headteacher's directive approach to leadership (under the overall drive and energy of HMI) and carried through a chain of command and accountability as defined in figure 4.3 (above). The nature of the relationship between leadership and structure found within this enquiry has also been demonstrated by Southworth (2004). He states:

Emerging from (Southworth's research) is the idea that leadership involves the creation and deployment of organisational, curricular and staff development structures and systems. This finding is one that is rather muted – if not absent – in much of the earlier research into leadership in primary schools. Previous research has tended to focus on leaders as individuals and emphasised their role and personal characteristics (p.119).

Gray (2000) maintains that the challenge for schools in special measures is to 'find ways of moving from the shallower to deeper strategies' (p.8).

In the model above, the next point, from structure onwards, is the element of

professionalism with the associated drive of headteacher agency. Headteacher B states: 'A small group of us really needed help in order to move things forward because you can't do everything at once' (B/interview 2). Headteacher D states: 'The key to survival really was just finding one or two colleagues who could move forward with you, and they formed the core' (D/216). This resonates with critical mass theory, a social sciences theory derived from the natural sciences.²¹ Accordingly, an influential but minority group assumes disproportionate presence and growth in number, through the potency of its influence. As a smaller group, they adapt to their surroundings and conform to predominating rules, but:

Once the group reaches a certain size, critical mass theory suggests that there will be qualitative change in the nature of group interactions, as the minority starts to assert itself and thereby transform the institutional culture, norms and values (Norris and Lovenduski, 2001, p.3).

Furthermore, embedded in the qualitative change within group interactions, and becoming more forceful as the group becomes influential, are the necessary foundations of distributive leadership. This proves to be fundamental in achieving sustainability for the cultural change that is necessary.

At this point it is contended that followership is focused, to a significant extent, on external leadership (external agency) and the demands of the external requirements of the inspection. School-based leadership fulfils the role of junior partner and exhibits a tendency to be an agent of the external agency. In the case studies this is evidenced in the demands to satisfy the requirements and meet with the approval of HMI. The discretionary dimension of this followership is held in abeyance, but needing to be prepared to flourish in order to build current and future capacity.

Finally, in summary of the entirety of the arguments in this section, the characterisation of leadership within this phase may be termed: leading counter-culturally.

THE THIRD PHASE: RECOVERED – LEADING THROUGH CULTURAL CONGRUENCE

The chronology of this phase is the removal from special measures and the period beyond (post-special measures). The themes developed within the phase are: i) removal from special measures, ii) culture, and iii) leadership. The phase is itself sub-divided into the sub-phases of ‘moving’ and ‘evolutionary’.

Removal from special measures

Headteachers’ experiences of hearing their respective school were to be removed from special measures were frequently hallmarked by their heightened emotion, triggering an immense sense of relief. Headteacher A remembers the moment HMI said ‘I’m going to remove the school from special measures’ (A/127). She recalls:

(HMI) just stopped. I was sat next to my deputy and we just looked at each other and we burst into tears; because there was so much riding on it, there was my whole reputation (A/127).

This evidence demonstrates another critical moment, a symbolic watershed marking the decisive ending of the recovering phase and the beginning, albeit in tentative form, of a process culminating in the realisation of culture type B.

On removal from special measures, headteachers remained aware of the enormous task ahead of them. Headteacher G refers to the moment as ‘sink or swim’ (G/interview 2). Being removed by HMI mandated schools to go it alone, although this did not necessarily mean an accolade designating high standards of competence. Their removal was as much about an improving professional attitude as about achievement-focused gains. What is evident is that both headteachers and the external agency remained aware of the need to keep moving schools towards a new cultural type. Indeed headteacher A’s link HMI asked for an ‘exit strategy’ from the time of the first meeting. Headteacher A states: ‘She wanted it drawn up, she wanted to know the LEA would pull away and I could do it on my own’ (A/118).

It is at this stage that headteacher agency ceases to operate through the relationships represented in figure 4.3 (p.117). The change is sudden, decisive and invariably irreversible. It now begins to re-engage the professional leadership of others across the school. Through changing relationships between leaders and followers it begins to create revised forms of learning communities which are hallmarked by critical elements of leadership. Hence, the cultural dynamic changes and a significant power shift begins. The school is no longer subject to 'the use of simple instruments; hierarchical observation, normalising judgement' (Foucault, 1977, p.170). Perception of surveillance recedes and this in itself encourages a new and emerging culture. Nevertheless, Perryman (2005) observes that schools in special measures still have difficulty moving beyond the external pressure, and this issue requires further attention here.

Culture

The recovered phase is characterised by an emerging culture of professional confidence that eventually becomes established as the norm. Yet the study demonstrates that headteachers found that leading schools beyond the reach of special measures took longer than they had initially expected. Headteacher F states:

You can't just change it overnight, you have to wean away ... certainly some staff skills need to be developed further ... as the staff become more empowered and experienced and skilled you would expect them to take on more and more as you would normally expect to be happening in a school anyway. But you have to build them ... it's very important that you don't suddenly put everything on them, which then knocks them back because they're not ready to take it on. It really is building their confidence back again ... they need that support, they need that help to get back to where they (were), that support, that belief in themselves (F/108).

Transformation from the recovering phase, to the full realisation of culture type B, proved tortuous in process and complex in practice, as demonstrated from this comment.

Although withdrawal of external agency was initially celebrated, it subsequently left some headteachers with preliminary feelings of exposure and vulnerability; for this invariably happened before the opportunity to complete the transition to the self-perpetuating and

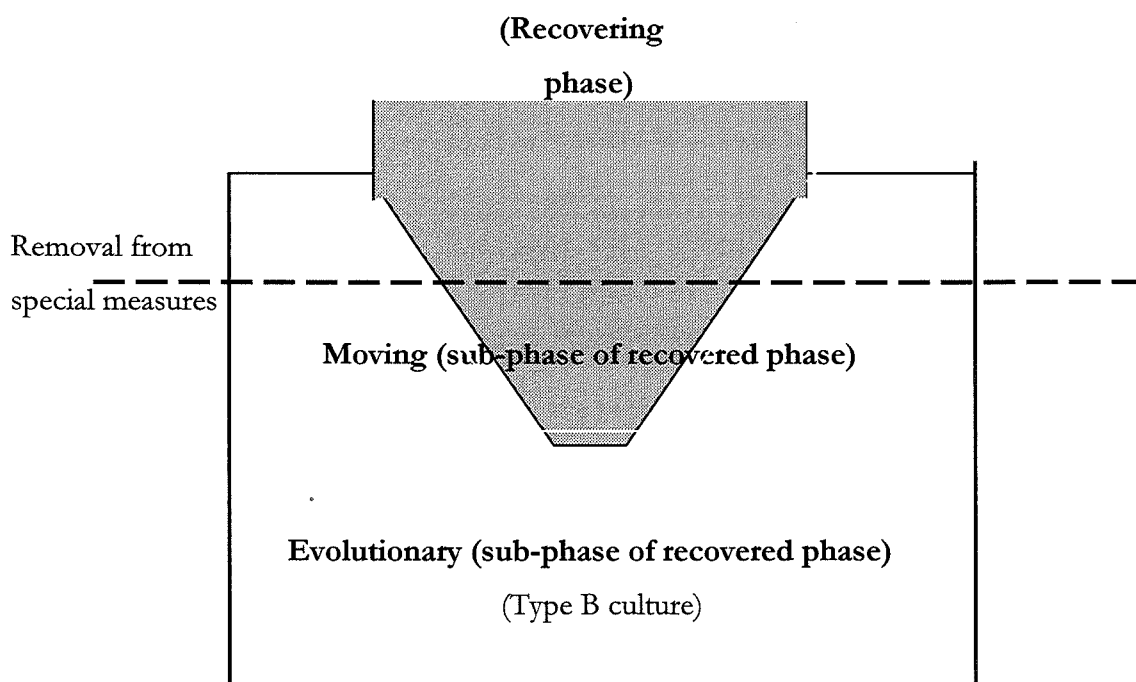
to school. Headteacher F contrasts two experiences,²² the first representing less than one year and the second representing more than two years. She postulates the idea that for a school not placed in special measures the critical period for the loss of momentum comes immediately after the inspection (earlier described as ‘post-inspection syndrome’ (Sandbrook, 1997)). Conversely, for schools recovering from special measures, it is as if this phenomenon is postponed until the school is removed. This postponement represents a further challenge for the headteachers, a further critical period. Headteacher F states:

From what I’ve been told, a normal OfSTED, when you don’t go into special measures, can be similar. Staff and everyone go into a bit of a dip because that pressure valve has been released, and then you have to come out of that malaise to keep going (F/second interview).

Although in all cases it became apparent that schools experienced a rite of passage in leaving special measures, the next and final phase may be usefully divided into two distinct sub-phases. The model below (figure 4.4, p.123) is an adaptation from the model figure 4.1 (p.82) showing reported progression from the recovering phase through to the full realisation of culture type B. Of particular note is the gradual tapering of the shaded shape representing the incremental demise of the recovering phase into the subsequent non-shaded shape of the recovered phase. This represents not only varying experiences and timescales between cases but illustrates the finding of the manifestation of two distinct stages – the sub-phases. These sub-phases constitute the entirety of the recovered phase that occurs through the passage of time, from the precise moment that the school is removed from special measures to the secure establishment of culture type B. These sub-phases of the process are designated as the ‘moving’ and the ‘evolutionary’ (the latter term derived from Joyce *et al.*, 1999). The cultural characteristics of the first sub-phase largely represents a continuation of that found in the recovering phase (modified by having left special measures, although with the school now required to act independently). Conversely, the cultural characteristics of the second sub-phase are more distinctive and are as detailed below.

²² A precise analysis of the different positions is complicated (and enriched) by the fact that most case headteachers had moved to new posts, with two, by the time of the second

Figure 4.4: Post special measures (extracted and developed from figure 4.1, p.82)



This enquiry demonstrates that transformation from the recovering to the recovered sub-phases is completed incrementally (sometimes within a significant length of time). This applies differentially between the cases. In the context of the timescales of this study, most headteachers had not completed the transformation by the time of the second interviews, although some claimed that in most respects they had (e.g. headteachers B and G). Headteacher D states: ‘I think at that point we were improving but quite confused’ (D/159). She continues:

I think that when we came out of special measures we were still in a state of confusion ... we felt, we’re OK now, we’re achieving satisfactory standards and the rest of it, but we actually want to put our own interpretation on this of what good practice is. We wanted to spread our wings a bit and not just toe the party line (D/161).

Headteacher D maintains that being removed from special measures gave her school permission to use professional discretion. She states:

Hence the transition to the moving sub-phase is characterised by a sudden realisation of greater autonomy. This is especially with regard to the freedom from external agency, but also to the formulation of a tentative and fledgling professionalism. The evidence indicates, however, that this had not yet sufficiently progressed beyond the observable elements of dependency, predicated upon the need for external accountability nurtured during the phase of recovering. Headteacher A describes it thus:

It makes people accountable to me, by virtue of the fact that HMI is coming and I think we are still in that process. Even though HMI are not coming they are still looking to me, still trying to please me, still trying to second guess. "This is what she would like us to do. We'll not do that because she might not like it" (A/interview 2).

This left the headteacher feeling vulnerable and sometimes isolated, a feeling shared among other colleagues. She states:

If I'm not here things won't happen, my influence is such that everybody behaves in the way they're supposed to, nobody is taking responsibility ... we can't be in that (type B) culture, because everybody is relying on the systems and structures that we put in place to come out of special measures and me to take that responsibility' (A/interview 2).

In recognising the potential danger she states: 'If we don't change from me to everybody ... the school will be in danger' (A/interview 2).

In the timeframe of the study, some but not all of the headteachers, were able to report they had reached the evolutionary sub-phase and hence the full realisation of culture type B. The implication of this is that there is comparatively less empirical evidence at this juncture than at other points in the study, although headteachers were willing to share their aspirations as well as their realisations. Those claiming to have reached this sub-phase (e.g. headteachers D, E and G) reported their energy to be more focused on vision, strategy and systems thinking (Fullan, 2005). This gave their respective institutions a more forward looking momentum and the cultures an organic and sustainable nature. The evolutionary sub-phase of the recovered phase represents a post-special-measures culture

solving in the context of active collegiality.²³ Headteacher B reports: 'a culture where people accept experimentation and change' (B/interview 2). Headteacher G states:

A school needs to be successful across the board we are a team where people are listened to ... incessantly looking to the problem of communication. ...it's about listening to all those things that will make your school a better place ... we've listened and people genuinely know and feel that part of our success' (G/172).

This culture nurtures a homeostasis of change rather than of tradition, with an increasing tendency towards 'internal commitment' (Argyris, 2000, p.40). Institutional accountability is appropriately situated in a complex web of wider accountabilities and the culture encourages enquiry-based learning and a constructivist epistemology. This is, furthermore, represented by healthy relationships with the external educational environment and agency. Schein (1992) states group culture may be defined as:

A pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to those problems (p.12).

From the evidence of this enquiry, what appears to be happening culturally finds resonance in Habermas' (1987) theory of 'communicative action'. Here he postulates contrasting notions of a 'systemsworld' and 'lifeworld' (p.153). The former term represents the structural or systemic features of an organisation more easily equated with the controlling mechanisms of bureaucratic rationality (the market is a paradigmatic

²³ Ainscow (2003) highlights a distinction between collaboration and collegiality. He cites Fielding, who suggests 'collaboration is a plural form of individualism in which participants are typically intolerant of time spent on anything other than the task in hand' (p.32). He suggests that once the task has been completed, such collaborative working arrangements are likely to be dissipated. I contend that this narrowing of focus and single-mindedness may indeed be a necessary feature of the recovering phase, while equally underlining the potential fragility and non-sustainability of such a culture. Fielding continues: 'collegiality on the other hand is long term and rooted in shared ideals' (p.32). Nevertheless, Ainscow maintains that in the complexity of real-world practice, schools do not operate in exclusive compartments of either of these conceptualisations, rather the means and strategies of collaboration frequently precede collegiality. This has resonance with change occurring through cultural transformation across the cultural types and phases.

example) – hence focusing on systems integration and means-end rationality. The latter term is represented in the actions co-ordinated primarily by communicatively mediated norms and values. It represents the ‘the transcendental site where speaker and hearer meet’ (Habermas, 1987, p.126). It is endowed with collective and individual meanings, lived from within, layered with collective interpretations and focused on social integration and moral purpose (Myerson, 2001). It may be contended that both are necessary in the dynamic of an effective organisation (Sergiovanni, 2003). Problems arise when the dominance of the systemsworld ‘assumes the form of a colonisation’ of the lifeworld (Habermas, 1987, p.196) and either through seeking or by default denies the lifeworld its proper and rightful functioning. Riley and MacBeath (2003) cite Tompkins, an education pioneer of the late 19th century, stating: ‘the organisation of the school must be kept mobile to its inner life’ (p.180).

Headteacher E refers, with some resignation, to the satisfaction and fulfilment in reaching the realisation of culture type B, through the route and journey of special measures. He states ruefully: ‘It took this to be actually living at that kind of pitch’ (E/interview 2).

Leadership

On reaching post special measures, headteachers faced a critical question: Do I want to continue to lead the school beyond the recovering phase? This accentuated a realisation of the difference in the demands of the cultures and the consequent approaches required. For most it seemed they had reached a professional watershed and the headteachers arrived at different decisions. For some, taking their school through this experience (the recovering phase into moving sub-phase of the recovered phase) proved enough. Headteacher C felt that she had been drained of enthusiasm for leading in that school and she wanted to practise her leadership elsewhere. She states:

Now, I’m going to be quite honest, that’s why I moved on, that’s why I left ... my job was done that’s what I felt ... We’d gone into special measures. I’d had to work extremely hard here in changing these things – values and beginning to change attitudes. We shifted on, we were removed from special measures and then I found it hard to take the school further, because what it required then was a different approach ... too much water had gone under the bridge for me to be able to move into the necessary creative style ... I couldn’t go on into that next stage (C/interview 2).

Others made a conscious decision to remain in post and see the school through to the full establishment of culture type B (e.g. headteachers B and E).

It is appropriate here to return to Hargreaves' (2003b, pp. 184,186) distinction between professional learning communities and performance-training sects (discussed earlier, pp.46). This presents a not dissimilar distinction as that between the moving sub-phase, essentially predicated on notions of technical-rational forms of leadership (the penultimate episode) and the evolutionary sub-phase, essentially predicated on critical forms of democratic leadership (identified earlier in chapter 2, pp.31-34). Hence the case studies provide evidence of changing practice in the forms of leadership – from that that may be described as transactional during special measures to a more discretionary and inclusive practice beyond (based on forms of critical leadership). This is illustrated by headteacher A, choosing what she regards as being most appropriate for the moment:²⁴

At the moment (staff) have enormous trust, an enormous amount of responsibility and I am very flexible in my approach. ... whereas I can already sense that when I move into my new school, in special measures, I will want to know a lot more and I will want to be involved a lot more. I will want to develop the people, so that I can end up back in that position, but I will work towards it. So initially I will be a much more autocratic ... until I am democratic.... I am choosing ... that which I think will suit me, will suit the circumstances ... changing to a more open, involving more people (practice) (A/54-56).

During this phase headteachers increasingly recognised the need to broaden their leadership beyond the technical-rational approach and orientation of the recovering phase. They consciously decided to adopt approaches markedly different to those adopted hitherto – to embrace the greater complexity of the perspectives postulated in the orientation defined by critical leadership studies. However, during the recovering phase evidence shows a limited application of distributed leadership. Mention was made of the contributions of deputy headteachers (headteachers B and E), although in some instances they themselves were part of the problem. Headteacher C states: 'I couldn't have a leadership team, because they were the very people who (were) criticised and actually stopped growing' (C/interview 2). There was no direct mention of subject leaders (although the interviews did not specifically cover this aspect). The evidence now shows

²⁴ Here headteacher A is reflecting on her current headship, while looking forward to her next headship (a school recently placed in special measures).

this tendency continuing into the moving stage of the recovered phase. Headteachers had not thus far moved their schools to a full realisation of culture type B but rather inhabited a position between the recovering phase and culture type B (figure 4.4, p.123).

Headteacher G states:

(It was) exhausting, you can stay on the conveyor belt while HMI are there, ... it's not that you're not being creative, because you are, you have to find creative solutions.... But in our case the conveyor belt is quite a narrow one, it's not an expanding one. Once (HMI) has gone you're then in a sink or swim bit ... the minute (HMI) goes you are still in a very vulnerable position and not a great deal removed before he lets you out of special measures and suddenly you're on your own (G/interview 2).

Crawford (2002) demonstrates that charismatic leadership (discussed in chapter 2, pp.27-31) is not enough. From her research she concludes that while structure is amenable to more rapid change, often being successfully effected through a transformational orientation, 'the failing school's culture and power distribution will take longer (to change)' (p.283). Those who lead schools through the recovering phase may not be those who lead schools beyond special measures. This requires leadership that is qualitatively different in approach. Chapter 2 explored the conceptual orientations found embedded in the literature (from which frequent references have already been made) and as already indicated, all the headteachers seemed remarkably adept at using characteristics from those orientations as appropriate to the moment. In that sense their leadership was the contingent form described in chapter 2 (pp.35-36).

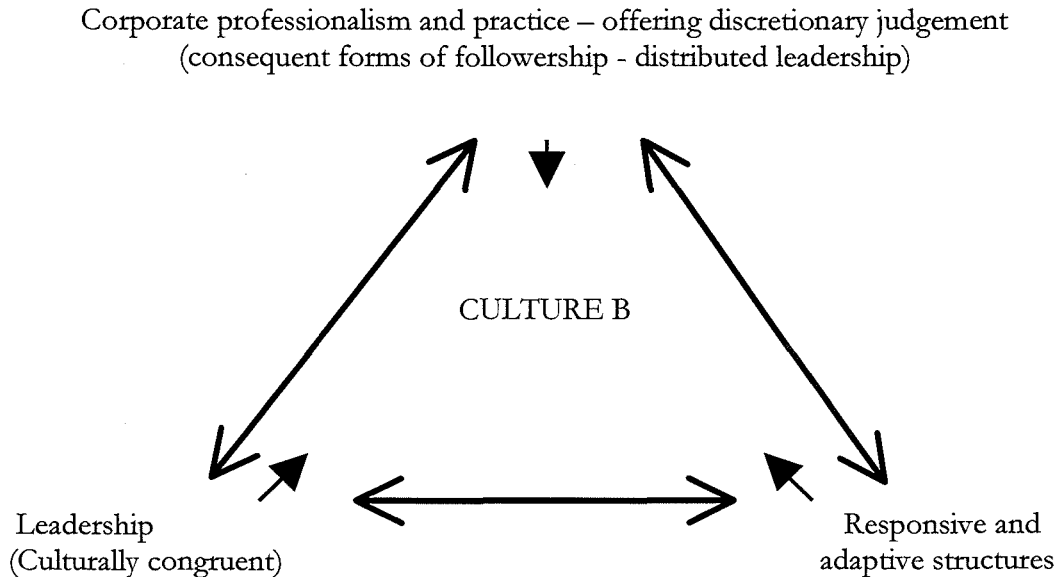
However, the evidence of this study shows that as headteachers encountered the evolutionary sub-phase (the last episode, the second sub-phase) the situation changes again. As the focus of leadership energy concentrated on structural and instructional considerations during the recovering stage, this now becomes institutionalised within schools' organisational capacities. In other words, that which was formerly located at the cutting edge of the school's forward momentum, instructional leadership, is now subsumed into the structural arrangements and attitudinal norms within the offering of distributed leadership. This means that the leadership approach required in the recovering phase has now fundamentally changed with the circumstances of the school. The distributed nature of that leadership is encapsulated by headteacher D who states: 'People were self-evaluating – other people were coming to me with an evaluation' (D/interview

2) (this reported distribution furthermore corresponding to Elmore's (2000) principles, presented in chapter 2, p.33). Headteacher A states: 'It's about learning, and that is very much now the culture of the school'. Here it is pertinent to revisit a former reference of Schein (1992):

Leadership is now the ability to step outside of the culture that created the leader and to start evolutionary change processes that are more adaptive. This ability to perceive the limitations of one's own culture and to develop the culture adaptively is the essence and ultimate challenge of leadership (p.2).

So the relationship developed and developing between leadership and culture may now be represented in the following model as it applies to culture type B. This still demonstrates the critical interplay between the I-DEDs that have existed at all stages of this episodic journey.

Figure 4.5: Culture Type B



This model once again represents a self-sustaining and self-perpetuating dynamic. However, whereas figure 4.2 (p.91) (culture type A) also demonstrates that dynamic (i.e. based on the same I-DEDs), there it represents a dynamic of negativity and associated low expectation. Conversely, this model focuses on the self-perpetuation of success and by association increasingly higher expectation. This occurs through a reported and re-

energised agency of leadership, re-professionalisation of followership (e.g. headteachers E, F and G), the establishment of enabling and responsive structures, and the assumption of creative equilibrium. Each now sustains and energises the other. Hence leadership is now culturally congruent, both energised from the culture and energising towards the culture.

On reaching this point, and in all cases, the headteachers offered pedagogical leadership that was at the heart of their thinking about, and their acting upon, the process of recovery. This development may be illustrated, as previously (see p.101), by a newly changed relationship between pedagogy and leadership (typified by Gunter, 2001). It is now at a higher level, as represented as profession or art form, and emphasising a constructivist epistemology. Bennett (1995) describes such teaching as where:

Rules and procedures give way to intuition, creativity, improvisation and expressiveness. The teacher as artist then has to rely on personal insight as well as theoretically grounded knowledge, and therefore requires considerable autonomy and discretion in order to function effectively (p.48).²⁵

In all cases, intensive top-down monitoring regimes were relaxed after schools were removed from special measures. Some sought more creative and bottom-up strategies for developing pedagogy and enhancing a sense of ownership, such as peer observation and shared development (e.g. headteachers D and G). Headteacher D states:

(now teachers have a) professional portfolio that they build up and they use for their threshold assessments ... that it's much more effective to have this dialogue and to debate actually what happened at that point in the classroom and what that activity was all about (D/232).

So the establishment of multiple cultural coherence, reconciling the complexity of interrelationships between cultural layers (Schein, 1992) and the harmonisation and balancing of the I-DEDs, are features of schools that seem to have successfully moved beyond special measures. Now culture can provide the knowledge, beliefs and norms

²⁵ Hargreaves (1994) explores the emotions of guilt experienced among teachers. This he exemplifies as 'guilt traps' (social and motivational determinants of teacher guilt: commitment to care, open-endedness, intensification, and perfectionism) and 'guilt trips' (means by which the guilt is dealt with: burnout, cynicism and early exit) of teaching. He claims that the guilt of headteachers and teachers is socially generated, emotionally located and practically consequential. Hargreaves states: 'and it can be eased by creating professional communities of situated (not "scientific") certainty and support' (p.156).

from which organisations derive their significance (Habermas, 1987; Dimmock and Walker, 2002). In Schein's (1992) model of leading cultural change, the final step is for the leader to 'refreeze' (p.302) the organisation in its new cognitions and behaviours. This is so that it may be congruent with formerly disconfirming data, thereby allowing the inner integrity of the institution and the external wider culture to become re-equilibrated. Schein states: 'Behaviour change can be coerced, but it will not last once the coercive force is lifted unless cognitive redefinition has preceded or accompanied it' (p.302). The redistribution of power may now be seen to be serving the re-professionalisation of schools.

In summation of the entirety of the arguments in this section, the characterisation of leadership at the completion of this phase is termed: leading through cultural congruence.

A theoretical formulation of headship

Finally in this sub-section, through analysing meaning within the cases (across the phases – and sub-phases) it has become necessary to offer a theoretical formulation of headship demonstrating the complexity that is embedded intrinsically in the act of leading. This broadens the conceptualisation of headship through identification of: i) leadership style, ii) leadership approach, and iii) leadership theory. This is represented as follows.

Leadership style. This concerns the leader's passions, disposition and values in leading the school. Headteacher A states: 'I think it is part of it is your personality. I haven't quite finished wrestling with this one. I think a lot of it is down to you as an individual' (A/149). Style represents the enduring and underpinning feature of their enterprise, largely based on personality traits (e.g. as presented in such devices as the Myers Briggs personality indicator, which seeks to identify personality types and their characteristics (Goldsmith and Wharton, 1993)) bolstered by growing professional understanding and experience. (This relates to the earlier contention that interviews sought to be educative for participants, p.56.) It is fundamentally drawing on the individual's educational principles and beliefs (Day *et al.*, 2000). Headteacher C states: 'Leadership style ... you can't impose that on people and expect them to be robots and automatically take on what other people are saying' (C/119). Headteacher C states:

You can't become somebody else because you are you ... but I would say you can adopt a different ... approach, which may from the outside appear you are ... changing the way that you are ... when I think about special measures I was very autocratic in my approach (C/interview 2).

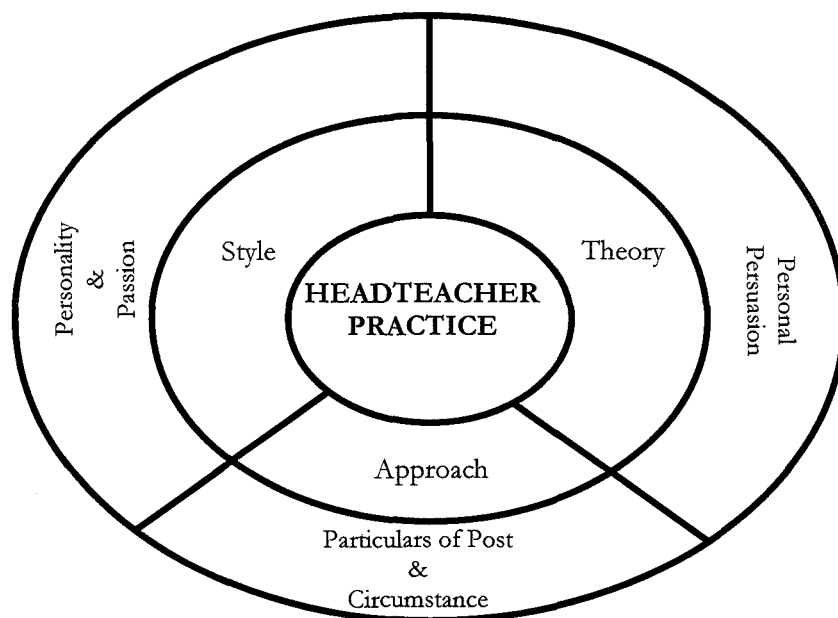
Leadership approach. This concerns the procedural, the actions and activities of leading the school. These are predicated and focused upon the present educational position of the institution, specifically located within its currently pervading cultural landscape and climate. This resonates with Eraut's (1994) 'process' knowledge (p.80) (knowing how). Gardner (1995) examined the lives of exemplary leaders and concluded that common and enduring characteristics could be identified. He found that leaders act in ways congruent with their core values and lead in ways appropriate. This study also shows that each headteacher operated in accordance with the context demanded by the school's status (special measures). This may be illustrated in essence, by headteacher E, who states: 'I don't think my style of leadership has changed really, just the different directions I'm leading in' (referring to the period of going beyond special measures) (E/177). The evidence shows that whereas positional power may be emphasised during recovering, the recovered phase of autonomous and collegiate professionalism is more about persuasive power.

Leadership theory. This may be closely linked to approach (e.g. the technical-rational approach during the recovering phase) but is also linked to personal preference and value-based beliefs that are informed by intellectual and theoretical understandings. This resonates with Eraut's (1994) 'propositional' forms of professional knowledge (p.103) (knowing that). Earlier in the study this form was cited as of being in danger of becoming the missing element in the professional development of headteachers, or at least of not being developed in combination with process knowledge (see pp.24-25). Indeed, theoretical, propositional knowledge can act to mediate style. For example, when a naturally extroverted and charismatic leader practises forms more easily associated with critical orientations of leadership (e.g. headteacher B, whose practice, based on her informed understanding, changed in response to the school's position during and beyond special measures). Eraut (1994) states:

When we talk about people's perspectives and preconceptions, we acknowledge that they perceive and think about the world in their own particular way. They have their own theories about what is out there and how the world works; and these theories affect their behaviour, even if they are only partly aware of them (p.76).

The evidence clearly indicates that participants' underlying assumptions were implicitly theory-based and conceptually formed, though no discussions of these theories or concepts played a significant part of the interviewing in this enquiry. Therefore, the equation may be represented as: person and beliefs (leadership style), plus school situation and context (leadership approach), plus personal persuasion and intellectual position (leadership theory). These interrelated aspects equal the totality of the practice of the leadership offered in the given situations and at the given times of this study. This amounts to a leadership model rooted in person, focused on context and grounded in theory (figure 4.6, below). This offers an alternative to the national models of the professional development of headteachers.

Figure 4.6: A conceptual model of the driving elements of headteacher agency



CONCLUSION

Through empirical evidence, this chapter has explored the journey of special measures. Specifically it has focused on the episodic cultural change occurring and the relationship between headship and cultural transformation. It has identified three phases (the third divided into two sub-phases) designated as first, dysfunctional; second, recovering; and third, recovered. From the evidence it is argued that in each culture or phase, the agency of leadership is applied according to the circumstances of the school. First, leading through cultural dissonance; second, leading counter-culturally; third, leading through cultural congruence. Furthermore, it has identified that during the second phase, headteachers frequently operated as 'outsiders' in their schools.

The chapter has teased out the role of external agency and how this contributes to the recovery of schools. It has been argued that being in special measures (or any other position) requires headteacher leadership predicated upon circumstance. This is defined in the necessitated approach, formulated by leadership style and underpinned by leadership theory; offered for both the appertaining cultural type and for the successful transformation of that culture.

The final chapter summarises the main findings of the study.

Chapter 5
**Conclusions to the study and the identification of professional
implications**

INTRODUCTION

This final chapter summarises the study's findings, reflects critically on the enquiry and points to future directions for research. Dissemination of outcomes is considered and there are reflections upon the implications for the researcher's own professional life.

It is contended that this research has contributed to understanding the leadership of schools in and beyond special measures. It has specifically concentrated on headteachers successfully leading their schools through episodic and transformational cultural change. The research question (p.17) focused the enquiry on exploring how leadership agency initiates, and capitalises upon, self-generated and external influence in the process of that change. In summarising where the investigation has led, conclusions, explanations and tentative generalisation of the journey are offered. The findings are presented under the following headings:

- the phases of special measures, underpinning cultural change and transformation;
- the relationship between leadership (headship) agency and cultural transformation;
- a conceptualisation of headship – based on school circumstance.

FINDINGS

The phases of special measures underpinning cultural change and transformation

The evidence from the leadership narratives (case studies) represents a chronology of episodic change through three distinctive phases, from a cultural type termed A to a type termed B (figure 4.1, p.82). Each case study is represented by its own attitudinal norms and cultural values (Stoll and Fink, 1996) and these relate specifically to the respective phases. The cultural typologies and the phases are represented in the table below figure 5.1).

Figure 5.1: Cultural typologies and phases

Phase (within which is located the related culture type (A or B) and/or the specific characteristics of that phase of the journey)	Sub-phases	Description
1. Dysfunctional (Culture type A)		Pre special measures – may take different forms.
2. Recovering (Transitional phase)		Post-inspection; the phase of improvement during the period of the action plan and external monitoring by HMI.
3. Recovered (Culture type B)	i) Moving ii) Evolutionary	Post special measures. Divided into the two distinctive sub-phases of improvement.

The characteristics of the cultural types (A and B) determining both ends of the journey (embarkation and destination) are defined thus. Culture type A represents a dysfunctional culture with fragile coherence. It may be described as a culture of negative professionalism in terms of debilitating conduct and practice. In some cases it presents an emotionally abusive working environment with interpersonal relationships that appear protectively inward-looking or even destructive. Moreover, the evidence shows relationships with the external educational culture and opportunities for supportive intervention to be frequently fractured and fractious. Accountability is ill-considered and confused with some schools seeing themselves as being largely outside that pervading requirement. Culture type B represents a recovered, post special measures culture of discretionary professionalism. The evidence shows a cultural type deriving significance from providing knowledge, beliefs and norms from within a coherent organisation. It maintains the distinctive

purposes of the open culture of problem-solving in the context of active collegiality. Institutional accountability is appropriately intelligent and is, furthermore, represented by healthy relationships with the external educational environment and agency. The harmonisation and balancing of the I-DEDs (figure 4.5, p.129) are a feature of these schools that seem to have successfully moved beyond special measures.

However, the characteristics of each phase are not only defined as illustrated in figure 5.1 (above) but also through their respective themes defined by analysis of the data (figure 3.1, p.73). The first phase (dysfunctional) is rooted in the origin of the failing culture, spanning the act of failing an OfSTED inspection, and deals with the aftermath. The study demonstrates that, for all the schools, the inspection event instigated significant intellectual, social and emotional dissonance as external reality broke through (Whatford, 1998). The study reveals that headteachers perceived OfSTED inspections as an integral and necessary part of the cultural 'unfreezing' (Schein, 1992, p.298) of their school's dysfunctional culture. However, for many the failure caused disbelief and denial and participants used the terminology of bereavement as a means of expressing their feelings following failure.

The second and transitional phase (recovering) covers the period from action planning until the removal from special measures. The phase was, in all cases, externally determined through the inspection recommendations, the formulation of a 'top-down' action plan, and the necessity for external intervention. A significant feature is that the pre-inspection culture (type A) is increasingly placed in abeyance and eventually neutralised, by manufactured and externally sustained structures and mechanisms. The phase is also characterised by critical moments that mark significant points of departure. How these were approached gave clear cultural messages which Schein (1992) calls 'primary embedding mechanisms' (p.230). It has been argued that this transitional phase does not possess the full range of attributes representative of a developed and self-perpetuating culture (as represented in the dynamic of the I-DEDs). The cultural attributes that are in evidence however, still make it a distinct entity in its own right.

The final theme that is represented in the second phase concerns the nature and impact of external agency. Earl and Lee (1998) postulate the idea of successful school improvement as a chain reaction: urgency, energy, agency and more energy. Urgency is generated from

the failure, energy from an externally supported and focused period of recovery and, finally, the school instigating and perpetuating its own sources of energy on reaching culture type B. Hence, the formula is seen to underpin the potency of a dual and combined thrust of internal and external agency, a notion that it seems is particularly relevant in the change and development of schools deemed failing. HMI are seen to represent and demonstrate the power and influence of external agency in the necessary transformation of culture. The agency of LEAs was generally welcomed, although subject to the grievance that the schools had not benefited from their earlier intervention. In considering the nature of inspection and post-inspection intervention, the study demonstrates that the influence of external agency was significant for the headteachers themselves, for their respective schools and, in particular, for the process of transformative cultural change. Indeed the withdrawal of this high-level support and challenge (particularly HMI) was a significant feature in contributing to difficulties that headteachers experienced in recapturing the energy of their agency and further developing their schools within the relative autonomy of the third phase.

The third phase (recovered) covers removal from special measures and the period beyond. The action of removal signifies a significant rite of passage, although this only marks the beginning of a demanding period of further development and the chance to 'refreeze' (Schein, 1992, p.302) the organisation in new forms of operation and practice. This final phase is sub-divided into two sub-phases – 'moving' and 'evolutionary'. The importance of this has also been highlighted as a distinctive feature of this particular phase. It recognises the complexities of travelling beyond special measures to the full realisation of culture type B. In the study it is demonstrated that success resides in not remaining within one cultural type or phase, but in proceeding through them through a process of transformation/s. The evidence indicates this to be a feature of special measures.

The relationship between leadership (headship) agency and cultural transformation

The relationship and interplay between leadership and culture lies at the heart of this enquiry. This enquiry indicates that leadership is determined by, as well as being the determinant of, the school's educational character or essential nature (formed by and forming of the culture). In a recent study of failing schools (Nicolaidou and Ainscow,

2005) leadership emerged as a 'significant theme' (p.239), whereas in this enquiry it has formed the focus from the outset.

Leadership is not an isolated entity and the organisational and wider cultural context in which it exists forms an essential part of the leadership equation. In this, effective leadership ensures organisational survival and well-being through social structures and human agency being intimately bound together in a symbiotic relationship. This interpretative study has explored, with reference to Giddens' (1982, 1984) hermeneutically informed social theory of structuration, how educational and organisational practices may be influenced or indeed transformed by the headteacher agency. Hence the enquiry has been effected through applying a social theory where social actors are both capable and knowledgeable. However, although actors have the propensity to act differently, and give reasoned accounts for those actions, nevertheless, they are liable to act in accordance with preferred and self-proven behaviours and structures – often embedded in culture. Thus they are continually producing and reproducing patterns facilitating and underpinning their behaviours (duality of structure – rules and resources). It is therefore contended that a lack of appropriate, or a surfeit of inappropriate, headteacher agency is a major contributor to cultural weakness, invariably resulting in school and educational failure.

In each phase the themes of culture and leadership were explored. Where cultures are regarded as effective (Schein, 1992) (as culture type B) they establish and maintain the intellectual, social, emotional and physical landscape of the school. They do this through achieving internal integration and reaching an acceptable equilibrium with the wider educational environment. Where cultures are not regarded as effective (as culture type A) the cases demonstrate a necessity for the radical solution of cultural transformation. They equally demonstrate how the approach adopted by the leadership of an institution

facilitates the process of transformation.²⁶ But what has also been shown is the impact of cultural considerations on the practice of that leadership. Accordingly, the multi-faceted complexity of school transformation in the context of schools in special measures has been demonstrated.

Leadership has specifically been explored in its relationship to the three phases, yielding a conceptual model that explores the relationship and interplay between the I-DEDs (figure 2.1, p.42). The model, demonstrating the interdependency between leadership, structure and corporate professionalism, has been applied in each phase (models – figures 4.2 (p.91), 4.3 (p.117), 4.5 (p.129)) and moreover, juxtaposed with Schein's (1992) model of organisational cultures (figure 2.2, p.44). Therefore from the empirical evidence is offered some explanation as to how leadership behaviours have impacted upon cultural change and how leadership agency is considered by participants to be most effective. Hence the difference between the models derived from the model in figure 2.1 (p.42), and particularly in relation to leadership, may be summarised as follows.

The first model (figure 4.2, p.91) demonstrates the dysfunctional phase, representing an enveloping culture of negativity (type A) seemingly over-riding and sometimes marginalising the design and the force of headteacher agency. This can occur through negative followership or lack of organisational structure. On occasions headteachers may dominate the elements of structure and professionalism, and so dominate and

²⁶ Recent pronouncements and policy initiatives from the UK government have tended to emphasise school transformation rather than improvement (Hargreaves D., 2003). This study argues that both are necessary and that there is an important dynamic between them. Hopkins (2001) examined the evolving state of school improvement, postulating 'authentic school improvement' (p.18). Yet even this re-conceptualisation requires a fair agency of leadership energy to facilitate success. If, through malfunction, this fails to deliver, then the strategies of school improvement have only limited impact on schools. As with all strategies, the process of school improvement is necessarily bounded in its possibilities and potential for changing schools. Once the boundary is reached and possibilities exhausted, the way ahead is through a process that transcends an incremental approach, the seismic shift represented in cultural transformation. The evidence of this study leads to conjecture that, by themselves, conventional and narrow/technical school improvement strategies represent processes too limited in scope and opportunity (demonstrated by MacGilchrist and Buttress, 2005) to rescue schools in special measures.

disempower the culture. In this phase the leadership required is called: leading through cultural dissonance.

The second model (figure 4.3, p.117) represents a transitional and scaffolded phase, the recovering, where headship is supported and maintained through a symbiotic partnership with external agency. Hence the leadership is focused on, and responsive to, a narrow range of essentially external demands. There is here a need for 'dual leadership' (Gray 2000, p.23) as headteachers have to both maintain and change – the skilful juxtaposition of leading and managing. The leadership approach has a tendency to be autocratic and directive, formulated around a strong sense of self-belief and frequently practised in contradiction to the former expectations of the school's establishment of personnel. In this phase the leadership required is called: leading counter-culturally.

The third model (figure 4.5, p.129) demonstrates the recovered phase, representative of a nurturing, creative and evolutionary culture (type B) empowered by a responsive balance of agency and critical design through the I-DEDs. Headship has now become internalised within the life of the culture. In this phase the leadership required is called: leading through cultural congruence.

This is shown thus:

Table 5.2: Leadership descriptors

Phase (with related culture types)	Leadership
Dysfunctional (culture type A)	Culturally dissonant
Recovering	Counter-cultural
Recovered (culture type B)	Culturally congruent

At this point it is necessary to return to consider the three broad conceptual orientations of leadership discussed in chapter 2. The evidence of the study indicates that during the first phase headteachers operated in ways commensurate with the dysfunctionality of their respective school cultures. This disharmony resulted in inappropriate leadership, over-directive or timid and ineffective. The evidence demonstrates that in the second phase headteachers tended to employ attributes from both the technical-rational and transformational orientations of leadership. In the third phase the attributes of the critical leadership orientation appear more important – although not in the first of the sub-phases. Reaching the full implementation of culture type B is hallmarked by the characteristics of this form of leadership. Nevertheless, transformation of the practice of leadership is incremental and, as with changing cultures (and conceptualisations of leadership), there is a complexity of interrelatedness and overlapping concerning leadership orientations (some of this complexity has been explored in the conceptualisation of headteacher agency described earlier (and below) (figure 4.6, p.133)). Overall, the study supports the notion that a contingent understanding of leadership practice, as outlined in chapter 2 (pp.35-36), remains an important consideration in leading schools out of special measures and beyond.

A conceptualisation of headship – based on school circumstance

This enquiry has indicated that it is not so much the architectural form of the leadership offered (Gronn, 2003) but the appropriateness of the leadership practice that matters.

Much of the policy and empirical literature uses the nomenclature ‘style’ to describe how headteachers are consciously and unconsciously operating in their respective posts (e.g. Nicolaidou, 2005). This study has sought to extend this conceptualisation of headship. It has explored changing leadership practice in conjunction with the particular circumstances of this enquiry (moving through and beyond special measures) – predicated upon style, approach and theoretical positioning. Through their self-perception it has captured what the headteachers ‘did’, their leadership practice (the observable, although in this study not the observed). Importantly it has captured the headteachers’ self-reflections, their understandings of the deeper levels of culture and cultural transformation.

Analysis of the evidence indicates that what the study calls leadership 'style' (predicated on personality and principle) remains seemingly and generally consistent. However, leadership 'approach' (predicated on current circumstance and practice) changes in accordance with the phase of the school's journey. This accords with a recent study which found that failing schools require leadership that is 'constantly adaptive' (Nicolaidou and Ainscow, 2005, p.240). The third element to this equation may be seen as the headteacher's theoretical stance or persuasion. This has an impact on the individual's positioning regarding issues such as power and the practice of distributive leadership – for the theoretical can act to mediate style in accordance with circumstance. This conceptualisation of leadership practice has been represented in the model, figure 4.6 (p.133).

CONCLUDING COMMENTS and OBSERVATIONS

Reflections: limitations and directions

Griffiths (1998) states: 'Perfection in research is not to be found' (p.97). All research is subject to critique and should recognise its never-ending nature. This raises the issue of closure, a particular and compelling matter in carrying out enquiries presenting seemingly limitless possibilities. For that reason it is necessary to clarify what the study has not tried to do and acknowledge its inevitable limitations in the following four points. The first is that the study has not tried to gain understanding from the viewpoints of all the protagonists in each school. This has necessitated downplaying the contributions of other players appearing in this enquiry – notably those of the teachers and governors. However, doing this has maintained the focus on the research question, ensuring greater depth in the findings. Second, the research is in and of its time. It must be borne in mind that the interviews captured schools at a specific point on their journey. Moreover, evidence for the evolutionary sub-phase of the recovered phase is, for reasons stated above, more tentative and provisional than other findings. This results from the timing of the interviews within and beyond the journey of special measures. Third, had this enquiry been located at this moment then some outcomes may have been different, due to fundamental changes in the external educational culture (e.g. those heralded by initiatives of NCSL – network learning communities, and the Primary National Strategy). Barth (1990) contends that if the same things are applied in different circumstances they will, in

all probability, produce different results. Finally, and as previously mentioned, the need to be cautious in generalising from the singularities of this small sample and this methodological approach – the fuzzy generalisation (Bassey, 1999). However, Elmore (2000) contends that there is a need for an awareness of a certain type of parochialism. This maintains that ‘no knowledge of any value transfers or adapts from one setting to another’ (p.29). This limited view of knowledge transfer represents an inward looking stance that is not the adopted position of this study. Yet in the final reckoning, the research has sought explanation and not colonisation of the topic of enquiry (Southworth, 1995) in seeking to contribute to a tapestry of practitioner voice. It has, in so doing, illuminated the theoretical base and in turn generated a deeper understanding in the specifics of this empirical site.

As this research has unfolded, so other lines for enquiry have become increasingly evident. In completing the enquiry, the researcher was conscious of leaving behind a group of dedicated professionals who still recognised they had much to do. Although an appearance in HMCI’s annual report represents a just recognition of their achievements, in reality their journey of improvement and the essential challenge of their leadership of transformation had only just begun. Therefore the following three areas emerged as being of particular interest for further consideration. The first area is the need for more research focused on schools returned to special measures having once been removed. A second is the understanding of cultural change from the perspective of other social actors in the enterprise. The third is a need for more evidence on leading schools in the period following special measures (the recovered phase), especially the micro-political considerations in embedding culture type B. The researcher is aware that in this undertaking, a rich body of evidence has been collected and he acknowledges the complexity of the social truths embedded in the messiness of these real-world situations. It is recognised that these have in themselves the potential to offer alternative interpretations and even (at a later date) subsequent re-interpretation (Alderman *et al.*, 1980).

Professional application and dissemination

Griffiths (1998) maintains that educational research is not made distinctive simply by being carried out in educational settings, rather its significant contribution lies in its

capacity to further the rate of educational theorising and practice. Having used opportunities from the researcher's professional practice in order to gain access to appropriate research sites, it has been his intention to contribute to the empirical and theoretical literature of understanding the process of leading schools in and beyond special measures. He believes that the modes of dissemination should reflect opportunities provided by the working contacts of a person engaged on a professional doctorate and this is what he has endeavoured to do. Throughout this course of study, the researcher's professional circumstances have changed and this has placed him in a more advantageous position to provide opportunities to disseminate and apply the findings and the contribution of this research. Hence, the professional implications and the modes of dissemination are presented in the six following points.

The first lies in providing the opportunity for professional repositioning (Hall, 1998). The researcher has sought to offer a counter-balance to the simplicity of the imposed solutions in complex enterprises. The desire to challenge the shibboleths of supra-certainty was stated at the outset and this research has given that opportunity to explore the complexity of leading in difficult circumstances. The second is through becoming a more discerning and thoughtful consumer of educational research. The enquiry has provided opportunity to grasp the nature and importance of educational research, to be able to plan, carry out and critique research, hence becoming a more accomplished generator of work-based knowledge in an 'open-source culture' (Hargreaves D., 2003, p.16). Third is an enriched contribution to the process of leadership coaching and professional learning. The conclusions have been shared with headteachers through seminars and meetings, and in the wider programme of the researcher's LEA. This is helping groups of headteachers to consider cultural formulation and transformation in greater depth. The fourth implication lies in the refocusing and informing of consultative work with schools that find themselves to be in difficulty. Kerfoot and Nethercott (1999) state: 'LEA staff who are skilled in the analysis of ... the culture of the school are the most efficient in the performance of this role (intervention)' (p.138). The fifth, is in gaining a greater understanding of the role of the school improvement services from the perspective of policy formulation. In the researcher's position, as LEA primary team leader, he has shared the findings and tested the research's veracity with his senior colleagues currently working in schools alongside headteachers. Finally, there is an impact on defining,

commissioning and contributing to future lines of enquiry, so binding together the educational academic community and front-line educational services.

ENDNOTE

In conclusion, and in the view of the headteachers, did schools in this study benefit from special measures? Fidler and Davies (1998) argue:

Although the stigma of being in one of the 'failing' or serious weakness categories is undesirable, it may be the only way in which a school has a good chance of redressing the situation. This is likely to be the case where a school has been in a poor state, for whatever reason, for a long time. The school may simply have lost the capacity to improve without a good deal of outside assistance (p.163).

It is reasonable to conclude that these judgements are borne out by the experiences of the headteachers and their schools that constitute this enquiry. This evidence shows that the inspections resulting in special measures can provide the leverage for producing the critical intervention necessary in order to facilitate the journey that causes schools to pass through the three distinct phases identified in this study. In particular it indicates that the agency of leadership through special measures can lessen or break the dominance of negative or destructive cultures.

Overall, the headteachers maintained that special measures proved a positive mechanism for the necessary episodic change and transformation that occurred in their schools,²⁷ although both professionally and personally it proved to be extremely costly. What is evident in this enquiry is that special measures re-energised the headteachers themselves, and they, in turn, report that this re-invigorated their schools. Importantly, the headteachers may have differed in their initial attitudes to failing, but the commonality of their experience was in the productive use and transformation of the process of leading through and beyond special measures.

²⁷ Appendix 16 forms a postscript. It presents the summative judgement on each school, taken from the report of the most recent OfSTED inspection on each of the schools. In each case there is a positive judgement (one school had closed due to re-organisation).

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Appendix 1

Protocol for conducting and reporting the research

- All the participant headteachers will be fully aware of the nature and scope of the study before agreeing to participate, and this should be the basis of their consent.
- The anonymity of the participants will be maintained throughout. In the final report, they shall only be referred to as headteacher A, B, C, D, E, F, and G. The context of their schools will be described and basic biographical details will form part of the case studies.
- Confidentiality will be maintained as to the source of the material obtained. No content from the interviews/discussions will be used outside of the context of the research and/or form the basis of any professional judgements appertaining to the work of the headteacher the school.
- Permission will be sought regarding the use, in case studies, of direct quotations taken from the audio recordings.
- Documentary evidence will only be accessed with the agreement of the headteachers.
- During the course of enquiry, the researcher will not be acting as an officer or inspector of the LEA, but as a student researcher from the Institute of Education, University of London. This distinction will be maintained throughout, in both the collection of evidence and the presentation of findings.
- During the course of enquiry, every attempt will be made to ensure that the opinions of the researcher will not interfere with those of the participant or contaminate the collection and interpretation of data.
- Drafts of case studies, compiled from tape recordings of the interviews, will be shared with the participating headteachers for comment and correction of fact. The nature of the research necessitates that where there is any difference of interpretation within

case studies, this will be resolved, wherever possible, through negotiation. If this is not possible, the differences will be recorded within the case study.

- The researcher will have ownership of the analysis, findings and conclusions of the final report.
- Access to the final report will be through the regulations and controls of the Institute of Education library. It will also be available for reference from the EdD administrator at the Institute of Education.
- Summative feedback of the overall findings will be prepared and distributed to all the participants.
- The researcher as author, together with the Institute of Education, reserves the right to publish the research, but only with adherence to the strict guidelines of this protocol and after consultation with participants.

Appendix 2

Interview schedule 1

Purpose of this research instrument: to provide a framework for interviewing the headteacher participants (first interview); to provide guidance for their reflections prior to the interviews; and to help to provide a structure for constructing the case studies and reporting the analysis.

1. Emerging leadership – personal aspirations to leadership:

- Professional background / history, career pathway
- Experience of professional development / training for headship
- Motivation for undertaking the leadership of a school in special measures

2. Leading the school through the experience of ‘failing’:

- What, in your view, caused the school to become ‘ineffective’? (When did these causes start to become evident?)
- When the school was inspected, was there a clear view, within the school community, of effectiveness, and if so by whom was it held?
- Was special measures expected as an outcome?
- Reactions to ‘failing’, the process, the report – from school and community
- Did the school have to fail – was the inspection a positive force for improvement?
- The quality of the inspection and the inspectors

3. Planning for recovery and regeneration:

- Action planning
- Other plans – e.g. restructuring (building a structure to support the dynamic of improvement)

4. Leading through the period of recovery / rapid improvement:

- Initial areas of change – sequence of events
- Style of leadership adopted (‘fit for purpose’) (Is there a difference from the style that would otherwise be adopted?)
- Rediscovering and communicating a sense of purpose (and vision)

- Leadership skills and aptitudes that are deemed necessary for leading the process of recovery
- Empowering others, issues concerning the practice of power and democracy – shared and devolved leadership
- The emotional impact on the headteacher

5. Coping with problems, obstacles and barriers to improvement:

- Overcoming any inhibiting factors
- Staffing issues (dealing with incompetence)
- Problems that accrued as a result of the school's post-inspection status

6. Building capacity and re-culturation (overcoming low expectation and low morale)

- Former culture (it would be helpful, if possible, to use diagrammatic or visual representation – or to construct a metaphor)
- Current culture (again if possible, use diagrams, visual representation or metaphor, as above)
- Creating the conditions for continuous and successful change (practical steps and procedures)
- Encouraging / enabling the dissemination of good practice
- Learning and developing – organisational learning and building the capacity for change and development
- Constructing and maintaining the emotional climate of the school

7. Maximising the benefits of external agency:

- External monitoring and evaluation (role of, and partnership with, HMI)
- Whether, and if so how, the LEA have contributed to improvement
- The contribution of any other external consultants or agents

8. Leading partnerships – communicating with and forming key relationships (rebuilding confidence):

- Governors
- Parents

- Community
- Pupils

9. Surviving special measures:

- Personal motivation
- Emotional and educational support
- Preservation of self

10. Leading beyond special measures:

- Leadership style
- Changing priorities
- Subsequent inspections
- Career aspirations

Appendix 3

Interview schedule 2

1. Discussion of model, figure 4.1 (p.82). Moving through the cultural stages/types.
2. Describe and discuss cultural features of Schein's cultural model.
3. Leading and embedding cultural change.
4. Discussion of models of leadership and cultural change.

Figure 4.2 (p.91): Leadership and culture in relation to culture type A

Figure 4.3 (p.117): Leadership in the transitional phase – the process of externally driven cultural transformation

Figure 4.5 (p.129): Leadership of culture in relation to culture type B

5. Teacher guilt – further information and clarification.
6. Networking – further information and clarification.
7. Critical moments – further information and clarification.

NB The models represented by the figures above were used as they existed at this stage in the research. As a result of these interviews, the models have been modified to those that now appear in the main body of the research report.

Appendix 4

Silverman: transcript code

—	This is <u>what</u> we did	Underscoring indicates some form of stress via pitch and /or amplitude.
HOW	What do you THINK YOU ARE DOING	Indicates loud sounds or particular emphasis.
()	Standards have changed () and	Empty parentheses indicate inability to hear the speaker in the transcription.
(.2)	Yes (.2), I always felt that to be the case	Number in parenthesis indicates elapsed time, in seconds.
-	I wish I had-	Hyphen indicates an abrupt cut-off of the sound or sentence in progress.
(word)	(by the time that OfSTED came)	Words in parenthesis are possible hearings.
(<i>explain</i>)	(<i>this person was the acting headteacher at the time</i>)	Italicised words in parenthesis provide points for factual clarification.
(comment)		Level 2 analysis recorded in parenthesis and in bold during the period of transcription.

The Silverman code (cited in Wengraf, 2001): an adapted and modified transcript code used in this study. These annotations are included in the transcripts of the interviews, but are omitted from quotations in the main body of the report.

Appendix 5

Base line data for the participant headteachers

Head (gender)	Years teaching	Years as a headteacher	Years in case school	Date of appointment	Professional qualifications
A (female)	19	7	4	09/1998	B. Ed. (Hons.) MA (Ed.)
B (female)	29	15	5	01/1999	Cert. Ed.
C (female)	25	4	3.5	01/1999	B. Ed. Dip. Ed. NPQH
D (female)	17	7	5	09/1998	B. Ed. (Hons.)
E (male)	28	11 (1 acting)	10	01/1993	Cert. Ed. BA
F (female)	23	6	4	04/1997	B. Ed. MA (Ed.)
G (male)	27	10	5	04/1998	Cert. Ed. Dip. Ed.

Headteacher A had been deputy and was appointed to headship four terms before the school failed. Headteacher E had been the headteacher for four years before special measures, headteacher C two terms and headteacher F two terms. Headteachers B and G arrived at their schools after the commencement of special measures, the latter well after. Headteacher D was appointed to the headship one month before the inspection, having previously been seconded to the deputy headship of the school.

During the study it emerged that 'newly appointed' and 'parachuted headteachers' continued to seek out difficult schools for their next appointments (e.g. headteachers A, B and D). At one level, this appears to be about the need for challenge (e.g. headteacher D).

At another it could be seen as the certainty of receiving accolades, coupled with the absence of creative demands at the leading edge (as in culture type B).

Appendix 6

Framework for case studies

Context – inspection and report

1. School and its situation
2. Introducing the leader – career, aspiration, preparation and training of the leader
3. Process of inspection and report

Leading through a period of failure

4. Finding (dawning reality) that you are leading a failing school (personal reactions and parental/community)
5. Institutional weaknesses – perceptions of the causes, and reactions to failing
6. Action planning

Leading through a period of recovery

7. Leading and practising the methods of recovery – building capacity and re-culturation
8. Perceptions and practice of leadership
9. Distributing leadership – issues of power and democracy
10. Coping with, and overcoming obstacles and barriers
11. Role of governors
12. Parents and children

Accessing the contribution of external agency

13. HMI
14. LEA
15. Consultants – HE and independent – networking
16. Networking – colleagues

Personal survival during the period of special measures

17. Personal motivation
18. Emotional cost and support – preservation of self

Leading out of and beyond special measures

19. Coming out of special measures
20. Leadership style and/or changing priorities beyond

Appendix 7

Case study A

Context – inspection and report

This Church of England aided primary school (A) is located in an area of outstanding natural beauty in southern England. The school is a smaller-than-average primary. The area is one that is particularly affluent, with a low number of pupils entitled to free school meals. There are few from the ethnic minorities. Ten per cent of pupils have SENs and the number with statements is well below average. There are very few pupils drawn from an ethnic minority background. During the inspection there were 203 pupils on roll.

Headteacher A was appointed to the headship in 1998, having previously been the deputy headteacher in the school from 1995. This represents an unusual situation. It appears to be an exception when the deputy headteacher of a school placed in special measures progresses to become the headteacher of the same school and then leads that school out of special measures. As deputy headteacher, headteacher A did not have a good relationship with the then headteacher. This she describes as ‘divide and conquer’, meaning that the former headteacher constantly sought to undermine her credibility, even while recognising her suggested innovations as sensible. She states: ‘I couldn’t make changes, and I would implement a change and then I would be told in a staff meeting that it wasn’t right, I wasn’t allowed to do it’. Headteacher A states there was ‘no shared vision ... I felt like I was working in a vacuum’. She eventually decided to leave and took a year out of teaching altogether. During this time, the headship of school A became available and she was asked by the governing body to become the acting headteacher. When the governors failed to make a substantive appointment she was encouraged to apply for the post, even though she considered herself as only having an outside chance. She was subsequently interviewed and appointed.

On assuming her new position, headteacher A called the governing body to a meeting to inform them of the LEA’s categorisation of the school. This despite earlier comments was still one demonstrating concern about the school (it was categorised as a 4, with a category 6 being the lowest). This caused some surprise and concern, although they had

realised that relationships within the school were very poor. This gave an early indication that all was not well as far as the standards were concerned. Headteacher A claims that the governing body had been misled about performance data and this in turn led to them unintentionally misinforming the parent community. The headteacher states: 'We had A*s at year 6, the end of Key Stage 2, on our PANDA both national and comparative. However, on our PANDA both nationally and comparatively at the end of Key Stage 1 we had E*s'.²⁸ The issue for the school was progress over time. Headteacher A concludes: 'They learnt in spite of us, not because of us'.

The school was inspected when headteacher A had been in post for four terms. She states: 'In those four terms we moved on hugely, but it was still such an issue with quality of teaching, I had too many poor teachers'. Teaching was a particular issue in consideration of the school failing, the proportion of unsatisfactory teaching being 31% at the end of the inspection. Headteacher A maintains that this figure camouflaged the full extent of the problem, as she and the deputy headteacher took on extra teaching commitments that were subsequently observed (at the end of day one it was running at about 85%, at the end of day two it was 60%, at the end of day three it was still at 60%). Headteacher A states: 'We agreed at lunchtime on day three (with the inspection team) that the deputy and I would actually teach some of the classes. I took the line there is little point in crucifying us; I could take failing, but not on that level'. In the final outcome, the key issues of the report were all centred around pedagogy, although leadership and management was also an issue. Headteacher A states: 'We couldn't have good leadership and management, although they said that I was very good as the headteacher and that the governing body were trying really hard'. The subject managers had not produced schemes of work as 'they had no understanding. They had no idea what to teach their own class never mind what you might teach year 6 or what you might teach year R in (their) subject'.

Headteacher A remained steadfast in her view that OfSTED had done the school a professional favour in failing them. She regards special measures as the proper outcome in the circumstances, as she believes that serious weaknesses would not have given the school sufficient resources to meet its difficulties at the time. She maintains that convincing parents (many from the business community), and thereby ensuring their support, would be easier with the extra personnel and time that would be available from

²⁸ The lowest grade that is possible (grades A*- E*).

the LEA. She states: 'I saw going into special measures as a positive, not as a negative. I had to some extent engineered it' (this comment was based on her refusal of a shorter inspection,²⁹ which could have produced a more favourable result).

Leading through a period of failure

The LEA seemed to be surprised that the school had failed, even though they had received prior warning from headteacher A. There had been a review about the same time as her appointment. Although headteacher A was then convinced of the impending failure of the school, the LEA response was that she was over-reacting. She claims she was told 'You are a new head, you're inexperienced, I think you're over-reacting'. Headteacher A further states the school 'had very good results, on the surface'. The school looked to be performing well from headline results (end of the Key Stage), yet closer inspection would have revealed considerable difficulties regarding progress over time. She further claims: 'We had problems with relationships, huge problems with relationships, but the results were fine'.

Once the school had failed, parents were furious: 'absolutely livid with the school, the governing body and initially the headteacher'. The inspection report was delayed, expectations were heightened and parents began asking questions about its non-appearance. At the time of its release, the headteacher estimates that every family attended a pre-arranged meeting at which the governors were also in attendance. The headteacher had 'engineered' it so that key representatives of the LEA were represented. These included a local education officer, inspectors, and governor and personnel services.

The headteacher took considerable criticism ('flack') during the course of the meeting, which she describes as: 'pretty horrendous'. The meeting was chaired by the chair of governors, although the headteacher fielded the contentious issues. The meeting had been carefully rehearsed, this being based around the key issues of the report and explaining how the school would follow up on those issues. The headteacher states: 'I was determined to give ten minutes on "this is my vision for this school" – and we had two and a half hours of horrific questioning'. Parents were extremely hostile. The opening

²⁹ At this time schools that were offered a 'short inspection' by OfSTED could alternatively opt for a full inspection.

question asked the headteacher why she had not resigned, others saying she should resign as a matter of principle. This continued in the vein that she 'ought to go, because that's what professional people do'. One parent offered the observation that in commerce when a 'company goes into decline the leader of a company always resigns'.

The governors blamed the LEA. The headteacher described it as 'a sea of recrimination'. There was a general feeling in the governing body that the difficulties of the school were not being treated with sufficient severity or urgency.

The action plan was produced at a time of heightened anxiety for all concerned.

Headteacher A states: 'Trying to write a decent plan was actually incredibly hard work ... parents were no longer trusting us ... suddenly they didn't trust the school, they were questioning everything we were doing'. Parents became more demanding of the headteacher's time and OfSTED were themselves demanding a time-consuming plan. One practical solution was for the headteacher to work away from the school in order to get some uninterrupted time.

The process of constructing the plan was carried out by a sub-group of the governing body and the school's AI, who met for two complete days. The headteacher states: 'We went through it (report) ... brain-stormed basic ideas on each key issue and what it might mean ... what the outcomes might be'. At this stage, the deputy headteacher was not involved as she had been criticised in the inspection. Initiatives of which she had been a part had been highlighted for criticism – English and behaviour management.

Headteacher A states: 'She (deputy headteacher) felt she had let the school down. So she was having to cope with her own feelings and just couldn't cope with trying to write that as well, at the same time'.

In this, the role of the AI was appreciated by the headteacher. The Diocese was also involved as RE was a failing and the school needed help in addressing the relevant key issue for development. The headteacher admits to doing the bulk of the plan along with the AI. She states: 'They did things like read it as a group and tweaked the odd thing. By that point they didn't feel they had the skills because it's such an advanced document'. However, the governors 'did a huge amount of monitoring of it, they were more than

happy to do that, took on all the responsibility for that, they just didn't feel they had the expertise to be able to write the document at that level'.

Leading through a period of recovery

After the inspection, the headteacher immediately embarked on an unusually high number of capability procedures (of teachers) in comparison with the size of the school. This meant a correspondingly high level of classroom observations with detailed feedback to those involved. Headteacher A states: 'So we ran three capabilities (procedures) at once and (the LEA) ... did half the observations for me and gave me all their notes and I wrote them all up'. The headteacher did manage to turn around the teaching of one particular member of staff. She states: '(the teacher) was a young teacher who'd I'd appointed as an NQT, but she'd come into a school with no structure, no reading scheme in place, no schemes of work. ... So although her teaching, when I observed it, when we interviewed her, was good ... she was struggling'. She continues: 'OfSTED came along and we still hadn't had time to implement (sufficiently), she had one bad feedback and that set her back. So she ended up having two failing lessons and two ... strong good lessons. So she went on to capability (procedures) and I think we did something like 18 (where) slowly the grades crept up again'. The resources that were now available to the school (resulting from special measures, the allowance of time and support from the LEA) enabled the headteacher to allocate the deputy headteacher to work with her much more closely than before. The headteacher reports that she has now been transformed into a 'very good teacher'. The HMI recorded that she had gone from failing to being a very good teacher.

Following the inspection, headteacher A endeavoured to establish more structures, with a greater sense of urgency. These included policies and schemes of work, produced in order to facilitate the school's pedagogical practice. For this she relied on the LEA and its resources. She states: 'The benefit of failing was that the school was opened up to outside help – (it) no longer stood in isolation'. Emphasis was placed firmly on learning, she states: 'I took the decision when we went into special measures that we were only going to talk about learning; we weren't going to talk about anything else'. This took the focus from teaching competency to an appreciation of children's learning and progress.

Cultural change was signalled by small events – the cultural embedding mechanisms. Headteacher A states: ‘There were little things that started to change ... the office door had always been kept closed, my office door ... and they saw that, even the less able staff, as a big improvement. But the real change began with a large and significant turnover of staff – 80%’. This meant that the headteacher had appointed most of her staff and felt that they were people in whom she could have confidence, the ‘people that I thought were really dynamic and strong’. She states: ‘Because I’d been able to give them more trust, the culture has ... evolved’. She continues: ‘People don’t always realise how long it takes to turn the school around. You can’t just pick up the school and point it in a different direction – children lose so much over time’.

Accessing the contribution of external agency

Headteacher A valued the role of HMI, although she reports that they actually found the pressure harder as the school progressed through the process of special measures. This was because the school had more to loose. She states: ‘I actually found that my relationship with her (the HMI) developed ... I had enormous respect for her, so when she would make off-the-cuff remarks ... I used to store it in my mind and make sure that I did that. Those to me were like little handy hints of what she was looking for, so I always worked towards that’. She continues: ‘I had no doubts that she would cut me off at the knees at the slightest opportunity if I made a mistake. I think she would have had no doubts about asking the governing body to ask me to resign, at any point’.

The visits by HMI focused on monitoring and advice, and in themselves provided invaluable feedback. The headteacher maintains that she learnt to read the cues and act upon them. Similarly, the HMI held meetings with all members of the teaching staff. Headteacher A states: ‘They all demanded individual meetings from her about their quality of teaching and she agreed to it. She did make a point that she doesn’t normally and she wouldn’t like it to become common practice, but she did agree to it and they found it invaluable’. The headteacher states the staff described her as ‘approachable, but very perceptive ... they didn’t feel ill at ease talking to her’.

The headteacher regarded the role of the LEA and the role of the HMI as complementary. Headteacher A states: ‘She (HMI) commented on the LEA role. I think

she was aware that there had been a very close relationship between myself and the AI'. The HMI needed to be sure that the headteacher could manage on her own, after the LEA had relaxed their level of support. Accordingly, she asked for an exit strategy from the time of her first meeting at the school.

Importantly and significantly for the headteacher, the HMI recognised the unique circumstances presented by the school. She was not being driven by a formula and displayed an acknowledgement that there were different routes out of special measures. At the first meeting she realised that there was not a great deal of daily and weekly lesson and curriculum planning. At that point the school was not following all the prescriptions of the national literacy and numeracy strategies and had made significant changes to the curriculum. Under the leadership of the headteacher, the school was endeavouring to generate its own solutions and the HMI saw this as being a real bonus. Referring to change, the headteacher states: 'She was very pleased to see we'd done it, because she could see why we'd done it. I argued my case'.

The LEA became involved at a more practical level after the school had been placed in special measures. The headteacher states: 'They (the LEA) were brilliant ... they listened ... I think that was helped by the fact that OfSTED said I was good and that there wasn't a problem with me'. The headteacher maintains this judgement about her was crucial and that thereafter she had the LEA's full support. The headteacher considered that the role of the AI was very productive and there developed a good working partnership.

The expected and hoped-for support of colleague headteachers did not materialise. In fact she was shunned by some who did not want to be implicated in the events and the circumstances of the school.

Personal survival during the period of special measures

The headteacher maintains that the emotional cost of special measures is considerable. She states: 'It was really hard actually, there were moments when I could have walked out the door and never come back; both before it went public and particularly after it went public'. She continues: 'In terms of the hours you work it is phenomenal, it really is a huge number of hours. I would probably say at the worse, that I was pushing 80-90 hours a

week'. This pressure came at a time when it was important for her to remain, and be seen to remain, strong. She was aware that other members of staff were looking to her for their support. She states: 'It's emotionally very draining because you're supporting everybody else whose teaching may have been criticised, who might be worried that they may be the one person who is going to let everybody down'.

Feelings of guilt also extended to her feelings about her family. With a husband and young child she was well aware of the conflicting demands on her time. She describes that as being a time when she would 'sit up to 2, 3 o'clock in the morning to do my work rather than stay here ... that was a decision I made ... I was still having sometimes to get up during the night and see to her (daughter) and all those things. And that is draining in itself and there were times when all I wanted to do at weekends was just lie in bed – and you watch your life drifting past you'. She did, however, gain emotional support from a member of the LEA, although she claims that the LEA generally was not good at ensuring the emotional well-being of their headteachers leading schools in special measures.

Leading out of and beyond special measures

The school was removed from special measures after two years. The moment of the announcement was memorable for the headteacher. She had already indicated to her governors that she thought that HMI would remove them on this particular visit. Headteacher A records that she 'invite(ed) the whole governing body ... and anybody else appropriate ... the LEA, the Diocese were there.... She (HMI) ... (reports) this is what my findings have been ... all the time you are thinking what is she going to say, because if she doesn't say we are coming out I've got to explain to everybody why, what haven't we done that is good enough.... (It was) ten minutes before she actually said, "I'm going to remove the school from special measures", and then she just stopped. I was sat next to my deputy and we just looked at each other and we burst into tears because there is so much riding on it, there was my whole reputation'.

The headteacher believes that the way headteachers lead will change according to the circumstances of the school. She states: 'I am choosing the style that I think will suit me, will suit the circumstances ... changing to a more open, involving more people style'.

She claims that initially, and while in special measures, she was more autocratic. Now she claims that an essential part of her approach is one of corporateness. She reports that she operates a system that gives the teams a considerable degree of autonomy – the teams being focused on: standards, teaching and learning, school improvement and primary curriculum. She states: ‘I cannot veto what those groups decide to do without a very good reason. I have no power to be able to say “no you’re not going to do that”, I can say “you’re not going to do that because of this, this, this and this”. It’s all very clear and it’s very clearly written down, shared it with everybody, very clear outcomes of each group, what their responsibilities are and who’s on the groups’. She endeavours to ensure that her leadership extends clarity regarding the roles of other members of her staff. She states: ‘I try hard to make sure that, like my deputy and anybody else who has responsibilities on my staff, (they) have very clear guidance as to what their role entails them to do ... I never undermine them in a public way. If I don’t like what they’re doing then I will talk to them on a one-to-one. I will never do what was done to me’. She continues: ‘I give them enormous freedom in what they can do, but they have to keep me involved’. She states: ‘I couldn’t do it when I first became a headteacher. That’s completely different, I’ve changed hugely’.

The school’s removal from special measures also had an impact on the behaviour of the staff. Headteacher A states: ‘We had to actually make a conscious effort to slow down the pace, it was too fast ... churning out paperwork like there was no tomorrow. We made a conscious decision that that would stop by doing things like saying that on particular nights of the week everybody leaves by at a certain time, meetings will no longer go on past this time’. It was also at this point that the school became more focused on learning and progress. She states: ‘It’s about learning and that is very much now the culture of the school’.

Looking to the future, she continues: ‘I want a school where, not just pupils or children are independent, but staff is independent. I want people who will question you, will push you hard, they will see opportunities and grab them. I want people who will take a risk because they know you will support them and trust them, and that you will never criticise them’. The headteacher believes the culture has evolved. Knowing that she is leaving, she states: ‘It’s on its own now, the culture will survive without me. Their culture, see what I mean?’

Appendix 8

Case study B

Context

Primary school B is a large urban school, with more than 400 pupils on roll. Situated in a large town in southern England, and at the centre of an urban conurbation, it has a broad social mix. There are six per cent of pupils entitled to free school meals. Twenty-four per cent of pupils have SENs, although only a few have statements. There are five per cent of pupils for whom English is not their first language.

Headteacher B was appointed, to this, her third headship, after the school had been placed in special measures. Previously she had been headteacher of schools in a rural and an urban area. Her former post, prior to this appointment, was that of an LEA adviser, an experience she describes as being relevant and appropriate to leading a school out of special measures. She maintains that being an adviser proved to be an 'eye-opener', and she states, in a passage indicating strong self-belief and confidence, 'I don't think I knew how good I was at the job I did in my second headship until I went into (name of LEA)'.

The headteacher's motivation for returning to headship was borne from a passion for the job, coupled with her belief that advisory work was 'boring me to death'. Her core educational beliefs, driving her actions, are: 'High quality education for all children, equality of access for everybody within the school situation ... not just learning in the classroom, that's learning about life'. Headteacher B states that in headship: 'You have all these people just waiting to have a piece of you ... but I love that, that's what I do and that's what I think I do well really. It's what leadership is all about'. She states: 'I wanted the challenge ... good schools didn't really need my level of expertise and my level of expertise is fire fighting'.

The previous headteacher of the school had been an alcoholic who died 18 months after headteacher B assumed her post. She states that the staff 'were demoralised, there was low esteem – they had been bullied by the previous headteacher'. She contends that he was 'absolutely disastrous, aggressive and heavy-handed both with staff and children'.

Headteacher B claims that he 'wouldn't allow the authority (LEA) in at all and when they did come in, they carried out an inspection where they were called liars, even the governors said it (the report) was a pack of lies and they rejected everything'. Meanwhile, the deputy headteacher, who had been in post for a period of 12 months, had started to take that which she regarded as being appropriate action. She endeavoured to expose the situation as soon as she realised the full extent of the problem.

When headteacher B eventually joined the school, she and the deputy headteacher worked closely with the LEA. The LEA responded immediately, realising that the school was likely to be on course for special measures.

Leading through a period of failure

The headteacher maintains that the OfSTED inspection was fair, being carried out by a team who were sensitive to the school. Yet she maintains that by the second day of the inspection, they knew that the school was failing. Moreover, and in turn, she believes that in order to move forward the school needed to fail, in her word, 'desperately'.

Although the LEA now expected the school to fail, the governors had previously had 'the wool pulled over their eyes' by the former headteacher. Likewise, the school's professional personnel were unaware of the extent of their predicament. Accordingly, they were bewildered by the verdict of special measures. The headteacher states: 'there was lots of tears ... lots of people (had already) lost weight before I had even arrived, they were very distressed. This eventually turned to considerable anger ... it was unbelievable and we dealt with that anger for a long time'.

Key issues from the inspection were to improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, raise levels of pupils' attainment, increase the rate of progress by improving the quality of teaching and improve the curriculum and assessment. There was a lack of pupil independence due to intrusive and counter-productive structures, such as the requirement for the children to be constantly and unnecessarily lining-up.

Most of the governors resigned. This provided an opportunity to recruit new governors and to focus on the negative culture of the school. A new governing body assumed

responsibility shortly after the inspection. They in turn appointed a substantive headteacher with a proven record of success (headteacher B).

Prior to the arrival of headteacher B, some parents felt that they had been kept at a distance regarding information, with others being favoured and informed. Parents were very angry about the school failing and this anger was initially directed at the LEA. The headteacher took the step of seeking out parents who were particularly anxious and encouraging them to find alternative placements for their children. This helped to reduce the numbers on roll, and so alleviate the potential for over-crowding within the school. (At the time of the headteacher's appointment there were 478 pupils on roll, a number which she regarded as far too many.)

The post-inspection action plan was produced in close conjunction with the LEA. The headteacher, who had been newly appointed, carried out this work while serving her notice for her then current advisory post with the LEA. She worked with governors, but she considered that the groups they had developed were far too big and unmanageable. After a couple of meetings, and in the absence of 'effective leadership' she offered to go away with the deputy headteacher and write what was needed, an offer they readily accepted. The deputy headteacher provided her with the necessary background to the school, and they eventually returned with a draft plan that could function as a starting point for action.

The plan remained at the heart of the school's action for recovery throughout the period of special measures. The HMI made the school focus on the plan, which the headteacher regarded as 'a good thing'. Although the plan lasted the entire period of recovery, other priorities emerged during the course of action and these also had to be completed before the more structural and fundamental changes could be made. The headteacher provides one such example as being the need to make necessary physical improvements to the teaching areas (some children were being taught in a corridor) before the overall standard of teaching could improve.

An overarching factor inhibiting the progress of the school, through the journey of special measures, was the lack of finance. Although there was targeted funding from the LEA,

the school was £60,000 overspent when headteacher B assumed her post (resources were poor, especially in areas such as library books and computers).

Leading through a period of recovery

During this period, the headteacher assumed a leadership approach that fully recognised, and, in her view, was in tune with, the school's predicament. She maintains that when headteachers assume the headship of a school, they convey a persona that conveys messages about their leadership and their intentions, so establishing credibility in the role. Although she readily admits that people may well comment that: 'She is not very warm and friendly ... people know that when you say something you mean it, they know (by) the tone of voice and all the rest of it'. She continues: 'But it was even worse coming here because I had to be unpleasant to people I had no desire to be unpleasant to. I felt particularly sorry for those young people who had had no support and no training. This school was failing and they were failing as teachers, not through any fault of their own'.

The headteacher undertook her LPSH during this period. The course provided her with an analysis of her leadership styles, which she regarded as interesting and informative. The feedback indicated: 'I was far too hard on my staff and I probably needed to ease off a bit ... I thought to myself that's rubbish, these people (the course leaders) have not taken a school out of special measures, I can't afford to ease off. These kids are suffering'. In contrast, headteacher B embarked on a rigorous programme of monitoring classroom teaching. A teaching file was established and faithfully maintained, recording teaching behaviours and statements for improvement. The monitoring was differentiated according to each person's perceived needs and the lessons recorded to act as a basis for feedback. In the job descriptions, she employed phrases such as: 'answers to the headteacher' thereby increasing direct lines of accountability. She states: 'There were two of us with officially no teaching commitment (headteacher and deputy headteacher) ... we had to do an awful lot of planning ... because planning was non-existent ... it's no wonder they couldn't teach'.

Headteacher B believes that to lead a school in special measures requires high expectations. She also maintains that you have to be a good listener and possess strong determination. She describes herself as having 'the ability to empower other people. I

think some people find it very difficult because they expect you to make decisions for them and to give them the solutions ... I will turn round to them and say "what do you think?" If they come up with a stupid suggestion then I will tell them so. We had totally dependent children and totally dependent staff here ... I've got enough decisions to make, I don't need to make trivial decisions. So it was making people take back responsibility'. She states: 'I'm pretty dynamic. I don't stand still for very long. Sitting down here (the interview) is a challenge for me. I'm constantly on the move ... I'm happy to go in the classroom and teach and prove that I can do it. And I had to because we had no staff and I spent a lot of time teaching in those first two years. Second year my deputy and I shared a class, we had no option and people saw that we could do it. HMI went rigid'.

The headteacher maintains that her physical location in the school was an important factor in embedding a new culture. Whereas the previous headteacher had been incarcerated behind a closed door, she wanted to be at the heart of the action. She recalls that: 'I went into what seemed a cubby-hole with no door on it, which makes life a bit complicated when you are doing capability procedures and other things like that'. Headteacher B describes herself as direct and authoritative. She states: 'I knew exactly what I wanted ... (but) it was like trying to get blood out of a stone ... I actually briefed my deputy with some things because we talked things through beforehand ... it was hard work'. She states: 'My leadership was to be seen and heard around the school, particularly with children and my dealings with other adults, so that they could hear the way I dealt with people; it was proactive all the time'. She believes her coercive approach to headship, within the school's situation, was essential for that moment. During the period of recovery, recruitment was difficult, as was, and is, retention. The school lost some senior managers and the headteacher states: 'If I went as well I think the school would dip again, straight away'.

During the process, the headteacher found herself appointing teachers on temporary contracts – as it happened, and of necessity to make an appointment, more failing teachers. Throughout the period, around a quarter of the teachers were subjected to competency procedures. Headteacher B reflects that foremost in her mind were the children and making things better for them. She states: 'I would say that a third of this school are very able children ... they were just achieving average results ... we have now

got a third who are levels 3s (at the end of Key Stage 1) and levels 5s (at the end of Key Stage 2)'.

The headteacher talks of the importance of listening to the children and explains the pastoral work she has undertaken with her deputy headteacher. She states there are: 'lots of children with hang-ups and problems and emotional needs'. She berates teachers who approach the whole thing as merely a job: 'Teaching is not just a job it has to be a way of life for the people in this kind of environment ... I have got some of those people who are really talented and can sit down comfortably in the middle of the classroom and know that the children will be there gripped ... but there are also those people who walk into the classroom and think this is (only) my job'. She states: 'I felt quite angry towards some people who were not working hard enough and giving what they should be giving to children ... where people had been teaching for years ... I was angry. Others, I was quite gentle with them and said "look I'm sorry, it's not your fault but ...". It's interesting that two of the staff who have gone have come back to us a number of times and they are very happy working out of education'.

Frequent communication was established with parents, focusing on the curriculum and the learning that was planned for the term ahead. The headteacher reports that parental attitudes changed significantly and parents began supporting the school. However, there was still a hard core who did not think the school was doing the right things, although many of their criticisms are negated in the most recent inspection report, their criticisms regarded as unfounded. Furthermore, connections with the secondary school, the professional support services and the community, expanded and improved.

Headteacher B contemplates her idea of a 'perfect school'. She states: 'You can think of people that you've met, you know those inspirational teachers that you've come across ... I'd like to take so-and-so and I'd like to take so-and-so, put them in one place and what a visionary establishment we would have ... actually at the end of the day it doesn't work, because actually you'd only be benefiting 400 children in this establishment'. She maintains you have to build a much better calibre of teacher across the education system. She maintains that: 'If we don't also change how we teach people to teach, or teach people to help the learners rather than just teach, the service (will) never achieve anything'.

Accessing the contribution of external agency

Throughout the period of recovery there were five monitoring visits by HMI. These were carried out by the same two inspectors for all but one of the inspections. Their reactions to the headteacher and deputy headteacher were 'incredibly positive'. The headteacher describes the partnership with HMI as 'challenging, they were interesting, it was good, stimulating'. The headteacher shared the results of her own monitoring with them. On the first visit, HMI seemed to be assessing whether the headteacher was capable of the task ahead. Headteacher B states: 'If she thinks you can do the job she'll help you ... if she thinks you couldn't do the job, that's it'.

The headteacher regards the visits as far more stressful than an OFSTED inspection. She states: 'I've only had OFSTED inspections when my schools were good.... So it wasn't stressful because I felt comfortable knowing that ... they were going to say lots of nice things. OK they may be saying that there are things I've got to look at as well, but that is not a problem'. However, in this case she knew they were coming to see 'absolute horrors and there was nothing I could do about it ... because of the quality of teaching'. The main stumbling block appeared to be the lack of consistency despite the preparation time that had been invested in lesson planning, pace and presentation.

On their visits, HMI talked specifically about recruitment difficulties for the school. At that time the recruitment of teachers in the town's schools was extremely difficult, and particularly for a failing school. The problem was addressed by advertising two management points, and by offering job descriptions designed for people to be able to join the senior management team. So the headteacher built a senior management team of seven people in a school of 16, this done in order to get the core that would try to work with everyone.

Headteacher B's relationship with the LEA was influenced by her having been an 'insider' through her former post. They provided a supportive but lesser role than that of the HMI. The headteacher operated selectively in terms of the people she engaged to work in her school and she made considerable use of some of the primary and subject advisers, while rejecting the services of others. She made considerable use of the governor and personnel services for which she had a high regard. The only use of an external consultant

was one from her former colleagues who led a training day at the school. This however, was not successful, as the headteacher believes that it was the wrong time and the staff could not cope with the messages being given.

Personal survival during the period of special measures

The emotional impact and personal cost were 'quite considerable really, cost me my marriage ... quite devastating.... It's hard, really hard, long hours; rare that I did anything under a 75-hour week'. The headteacher worked extremely closely with her deputy headteacher, a relationship that provided the professional and emotional support that was needed to absorb and negotiate the pressing and ceaseless demands. She adds: 'You have to have something else. I was very fortunate, until 12 months ago, because I ride horses and that was my release ... you have to have something else'. Headteacher B attests to the difficulty of balancing increasingly conflicting demands. She states that as a human being you 'remember actually that while you are pushing your staff into what you want them to do, they are human beings and they have a world outside. And it makes you remember the baggage they're bringing in with them'.

Leading out of and beyond special measures

The headteacher believes that the pressure and demands are different once the school is out of special measures, although she still works long and unsociable hours.

Looking to the future, the headteacher sees the need to build sustainability for the school. She states, however, 'I would not want to stay here for much longer ... I would want to appoint a good deputy and train them ... to take over from me'. She is adamant she will reach the point where the school is not presenting her with enough challenge and recognised that within her personality, over-familiarity can breed complacency. Nevertheless, she questions where to go from a big school and to still be able to receive the same income. While there are bigger schools, she is not sure they are, by the nature of their size, entirely successful.

She maintains that school B is not an easy school and never will be. She believes that it will always present her with a leadership challenge, although she does not want to be

doing that all of the time. She recognises there is a long way to go and that there will always be areas for development. Currently the school is considering the best ways for developing facilities for after-school care.

Regarding her changing priorities, she states: 'They change all the time. I would never have a school improvement plan that was set in stone ... if I don't achieve something in that given time, I'm not going to wear sackcloth and ashes and say this is terrible.... I think you have to have the flexibility ... there are so many influences'. As to the motivations that will drive the school's development now that it has been judged, in its most recent inspection, to be a good school, the headteacher states: 'I want to be a very good school – it's interesting that straight away they (inspection team) pick up my philosophy about how I feel about children and how important the children are'. She also states she wants other adults to assume more shared forms of leadership 'everybody has responsibility, everybody has a job description as a leader as a manager in some realm or other'. This, she maintains, she shares with her deputy headteacher. However, currently, her view is that the distribution of leadership is not evident, and, even if it were, she admits, she would still demand even more.

Appendix 9

Case study C

Context

School C is a medium-sized junior school, with 225 pupils on roll. Situated in a predominately affluent market town in southern England, it serves a mixed area of local authority and owner-occupied housing. The inspection report states: 'Pupils come from the full range of social backgrounds'. There are around 12% of pupils eligible for free school meals and 41% of pupils have SENs.

Headteacher C was appointed to this, her first headship, in January 1999, coming straight from a deputy headship. On her appointment she had no idea that the school was likely to fail an inspection and the LEA indicated no concerns to her. The school was inspected and placed in special measures two terms later.

The headteacher maintains that in her view the school was not failing, although it had a turbulent history. Previously there has been a long established headteacher, who had been at the school for about 11 years. The school had declined into a period of complacency since then. This had lasted some two years, representing the period prior to the appointment of the new substantive headteacher (headteacher C). Relationships between the school's personnel had become fractious and fraught, with little evidence of team 'feeling'. Headteacher C describes the culture of the school as being 'hard-nosed' or cynical, and certainly not developmental. However, with a change of staff, including the new headteacher, the climate of the school began to change significantly and quickly. The headteacher maintained that introducing different personalities quite quickly changed the 'feel of the school'.

During the pre-inspection period the headteacher was actively deconstructing the work and procedures of the school in order to reconstruct them in a way that she regarded as being more effective. The inspection was timed when the school was in the midst of the process of disassembling, but nevertheless, consciously focused on the rebuilding. This was recognised and made explicit in the school improvement plan that had already been

formulated. (This was later seen to closely match the key issues that the OfSTED inspection team identified.) The headteacher further maintains that following the inspection, the inspection team's key issues were parasitic upon, and exaggerative of, the analysis of the school's own self-evaluation. She strongly maintains the inspection was carried out as if the RgI had internalised a stereotype of failure. Once she had decided the school was failing, she loaded her conclusions with her stereotypical judgements and then found evidence to support them.

The inspection that placed the school in special measures took place only three weeks into a new school year. At this time, there were four new teachers out of a complement of eight. This represented a newly formed team, one of whom was a NQT who at this time was being challenged by her own inadequacies in the management of classroom behaviour. Another was the deputy headteacher, who at this stage in her career had had limited management experience. The headteacher herself had only been in post for two terms.

In the view of the headteacher and LEA, the report was badly written, with poor grammar, conflicting messages, repetition and key issues that lacked clarity. Headteacher C claims: 'It was confusing and I thought how you can have enough evidence for those claims'. The feedback to governors and LEA, which lasted for around three hours, was poorly handled by the RgI. She 'became very flustered but didn't really engage ... she couldn't lose face (but) she didn't really have all the evidence either ... even when we showed that children actually were making progress and our data was showing that'. Headteacher C maintains: 'Intellectually, I think, she wasn't able to handle it very well, and really I had the feeling of being in the hands of somebody who didn't really have my professional respect and that was very worrying'. In essence, the headteacher considered that the RgI did her job in producing a snapshot but she was unable to take the longer-term view. She states: 'This experience made me completely and utterly doubt the system.... It didn't help the school, in fact what it did was, it destroyed the momentum that had built up in the previous two terms'. She continues: 'I think we lost about six months ... what happened was that the school was so demoralised ... it had an enormous emotional effect on people because some of the statements that were written in the report were very damning of some individual teachers, some of whom were the new staff'. The headteacher comments that it did not assist the staff as it failed to identify anything of

which the school was previously unaware. Nevertheless, she acknowledges that the report did help in giving direction for the improvement of the management of SEN. This, she claims, was the only area the school had not identified for itself, and this resulted in the resignation of the SEN co-ordinator.

Leading through a period of failure

Being the leader of a school in special measures came as an enormous shock to the headteacher. She says: 'You have to look to yourself ... can I actually do it? ... it was very frightening ... I had to go through some sort of, I suppose, personal change really ... I think I'm a strong person and I have got a strong character and I have got an inner strength. But that tested me to the absolute hilt, it really pushed me.... For a short time I really didn't want to do it ... I didn't want to fail. So I made myself do it ... thank goodness it was successful'.

Nevertheless, the experience of leading in these circumstances does represent a significant professional risk as well as taking a personal toll. The headteacher recalls that after the report's publication: 'I had a period of about a week with people coming up and saying, "I'm so sorry", as if there had been a death'. She recalls that on waking in the mornings she dreaded having to go to school. She states: 'But then it's a bit like a bereavement, you get on with it ... it's like preparing for the funeral ... telling people, the going public, all of those issues and all of those events that you have to do. And you have to think, well I'm in charge, I've got to get on with it, I've got to organise this, I've got to manage people, and I've got to put on a brave face'. Parents felt sorry for the headteacher personally, and following the analogy of a bereavement, she states: 'I had flowers brought to me, flowers ... and people speaking in hushed tones and whispers'.

In motivational terms, the school lost time as staff dealt with their own personal feelings and the report's impact on them. Headteacher C states: 'I had been at the school for two terms. I was at least identified in the report as being somebody who was able to lead the school forward. So my leadership and my management skills were identified as being good – and I just clung on to that. But I have to be honest, and in my darkest days that didn't really even sustain me because I felt ill prepared to be head of a failing school. I'd gone into headship expecting to be a successful head ... suddenly my whole situation was

completely and utterly different. Personally, I found that very difficult to cope with....
Oh, yes I was very angry. And the staff were angry, they were very, very, angry, and they were shocked, enormously shocked'.

The key issues of the inspection report focused on improving the management of the school by involving governors and the senior management team; improving the quality of teaching through better planning, management of behaviour and raising teachers' expectations; raising standards and securing progress in speaking and listening, reading, writing, numeracy, science and information technology; and, improving the provision for pupils with special educational needs. In the opinion of the headteacher, the school lacked a vision of effectiveness because there was no common perspective or prospect on which they could move forward. The school lacked structures and procedures for improvement, and the culture was such that people did not have a clear view of where they were heading. It really was a matter of coping on a day-to-day basis. Headteacher C had started to create a culture where this could happen, although, hampered by the staff changes, she had decided to wait for the new team to be in place at the beginning of the academic year. So looking at effective practice, and the nature of a successful school, had to be a priority once the school entered the period of recovery.

In planning their recovery, the school had 'tremendous support' from the LEA through the role and work of the AI. The headteacher soon realised the scale of the task in hand. Moreover, she realised how the process of the formulation of the action plan was to prevent her from being able to get on with other essentials. She had tremendous support from the chair of governors, in her view a highly intelligent articulate man who worked very hard. However, the staff was not really involved in the compilation of the plan that was largely written by the headteacher, the AI and the chair of governors: 'because ... you've got time limits and deadlines to meet'. She continues: 'My style of leadership changed then ... it was noses to the grindstone, this is what we've got to do, this is the outcome that we've got to have and we've just got to get on with it'. But it did become a working document and all the staff had one, all the governors had one, we used to refer to it quite a lot'. She states: 'The key issues became our everyday work and we had to judge our progress against them ... what else have we got to do'.

It was important for staff to 'sign up' to the plan even though they didn't agree with the outcome of the inspection. This was effected by gaining an agreement that there were areas for improvement – everybody knew what they had to do. Headteacher C states: 'I remember saying to staff if we don't do this, this school could be in danger of closing and we won't have a job.... I reckon we can do it quite quickly, it's going to be hard work ... if there is anybody who doesn't want to do this or feels this isn't appropriate for them, come and see me ... sign up or go'. Nobody went and a new resolve was formed. The momentum gained force and the emphasis changed to seeing the opportunity for professional growth and improvement. The headteacher states: 'So it actually then became ... I hesitate to use the word exciting ... it wasn't exciting, it was motivating'.

Leading through a period of recovery

Of the eight original teaching staff (time when headteacher C assumed her post) only one remained by the time the school was removed from special measures. Those who had not been deemed to be failing teachers had moved on for various reasons, including promotion. The headteacher states: 'One of the good things, I suppose, about being put into special measures is that it sharpens everybody up. So professionally, it can be a good thing because you are so focused and really grappling with the issues'. Two teachers were taken down the competency route, although eventually they resigned. The deputy headteacher remained demoralised by the process and this made the headteacher's role much harder and lonelier. Effectively, she was leading the team on her own. Because of this, she did not have the opportunity of working in a headteacher, deputy headteacher partnership during that first year.

All this profoundly affected the approach being taken in leading the school. Headteacher C states: 'When you go to your first headship you don't know what you're doing. It's so new ... finding out about the job of headship ... and you're finding out a lot about yourself and you're finding a lot out about how to work with other people'. She continues: 'I had this vision for the school, I thought OK, come September we are going to really go together ... a lot about team work, a lot about working with other people, sharing ideas, wanting to have that collegiate approach.... But very quickly, I suppose the term after special measures had been imposed ... I became far more autocratic, led from the front, this is what we are going to do'. She states: 'I mean, I think that I developed a good team

... my whole style is to work with people and so I do try to work with people. We had a lot of staff meetings where we really explored issues, to a certain extent, but I knew very, very clearly what the agenda was, and no matter what was discussed at the end of the day I was issuing lists of: "please make sure you are doing, this, this, this, this, this, this – this is the criteria that you will be checked against when I come and monitor you, this is what I want to see". Do you see what I mean? I was imposing on people my ideas of what it was that we had to do. Well it wasn't my ideas, it was what I thought, and what the AI thought, that we ought to be showing. We were very much then into playing a game'.

During this period, there were enormous changes in the membership and in the processes of the governing body. A new chair of governors was appointed who came from local industry and had a lot of relevant experience. He led the governing body effectively and was highly instrumental in a cultural change within that body.

Parents kept faith with the school because they 'felt sorry for us and I think they felt sorry for me'. Then after a year, the school lost about nine families. Their reasons for this decision were that the parents did not have the time to wait for the school to improve. It was their children's education and their children's future, a position that the headteacher understood and with which she could sympathise. Initially, the school did not explain the meaning of special measures to the children. Nevertheless, some did question what was happening with comments such as, 'oh we didn't do very well did we?' The school endeavoured to respond honestly with replies such as, 'No we didn't, how can we make our school a better school?' The headteacher recalls that their response was to involve their pupils in helping to shape the sort of school that they wanted and would enjoy attending. Headteacher C states: 'I think that very much we took the view of what would it be like to be a pupil in this school ... the growth within the community and the spirit that we wanted to really nurture came from our relationship with the children'.

Accessing the contribution of external agency

During the process of special measures, the school was visited by HMI in each term. The headteacher concedes that professionally it was challenging, although during the course of the visits it was a question of the percentage of satisfactory lessons that were awarded, with the 'external pat-on-the-back'. The headteacher found HMI very supportive, far

more realistic than the OfSTED contract inspectors and far less threatening than anticipated.

The headteacher found that she was easily able to work in partnership with the HMI. She recognised that they had a job to do, but still presented a humane approach that did not want to impose or prescribe a way of doing things. The headteacher found this a contrast with the overt direction of the LEA, although she always respected her AI's viewpoint. In looking back, the headteacher considers that her school's link HMI was a very wise person: 'she knew ... about human beings and the dynamics and relationships that go on there. You can't impose, it's like coming back to the leadership style, you can't impose that on people and expect them to be robots and automatically take on what other people are saying'.

The staff related well to the HMI. The headteacher reported that they quite liked her. Likewise, her relationship with the headteacher was productive. Headteacher C states: 'she saw her almost, not as a colleague, but as a friend'. The importance of the visit was paramount. For about a week before her visit there was a feeling of notching everything up again and making sure things were ready. It involved the headteacher in issuing lists to make sure that everything was in place. The outcome, she states: 'was extremely important to us because if it had not been positive it would have set us all back again'. She continues: 'none of us wanted to feel like that any more. That was my fear. I got very anxious about the visits'.

The LEA had not expected the school to fail, although they did not have a clear picture of how the school was performing. The previous headteacher had kept the LEA at a distance by controlling the situation. She viewed them with tremendous suspicion and was not prepared to work in partnership. Headteacher C was very angry with the LEA. She states: 'I had come to this school and stood in front of the representatives of the LEA, the governors, and put forward my vision for the school, and I felt they hadn't been honest with me ... how had the LEA and governors dared to lure me to this post ... I felt so angry that I had been appointed to the school and I hadn't been told what was expected of me'.

The headteacher maintains that the AI was 'tremendously taken aback (by the failure) and I expect, although she never shared that with me, she had some personal soul searching to do'. Much had been anticipated of the inspection as a means of finding out the things that needed to be done, acting as a counter-balance to the school's own self-evaluation. The headteacher senses that there are two agendas within the LEA, firstly the standards agenda and secondly that of the educators who are focused on the wider issues of education and learning. She states: 'I think there is an enormous tension there, absolutely enormous and it makes it very difficult as a headteacher to balance that'. Of adviser/inspectors, she states: 'I know some very good LEA inspectors, also some who just toe the line'. She states: 'They're bashing on about an agenda, and that agenda doesn't necessarily match what's happening in schools'.

The school did not make use of consultants or advisers from outside of the LEA. The headteacher also senses she was cut off from her colleague headteachers, confessing to a feeling of an acute sense of loneliness. She claims to have not known whom she could turn to, or to talk to, because other headteachers had not had the same experience. She states: 'I felt very different from other headteachers. However, there were a couple of other schools that went into special measures at similar times and I had some support from them'. Here support from her colleagues was limited because they were all dealing with it in their own ways. She also claims that she had little energy left for networking with other headteachers: 'After you have spent the day in the school to actually go and talk about it, it's very wearing'.

Personal survival during the period of special measures

As headteacher C muses on the emotional impact of her experience, she states: 'Actually the enormity of the job impacted enormously on me, hugely on me, and after about one month ... I had this tremendous self-doubt and for two days I couldn't do anything ... I had always been a very successful person. I had never failed at anything. Never, ever, ever failed at anything really ... but this to me was actually a situation where I could possibly fail ... I didn't know how I was going to cope with that ... I was so desperate I got in touch with the headline counselling service' (local resource).

The headteacher went to see her GP who offered medication, but she needed to talk and to be helped to find a way forward. She records that she felt very much on her own, even though she knew she had the support. This induced feelings of anger, betrayal and helplessness and resulted in counselling for six weeks, where there was opportunity for talking about herself and how she was going to manage. She records that she found that enormously helpful, in coming to terms with a situation that was not of her choosing. Headteacher C states: 'I suppose we looked back at actually what I had achieved ... I felt as if I was, I use the analogy of climbing a mountain, and I wasn't equipped to do it ... This was the biggest challenge, most headteachers never have to face ... the public-ness of it all was very difficult ... dealing with the media, dealing with the parents and the community'.

Headteacher C considers that as a result of coming through that period she felt more empowered and buoyant. The counselling, she claims, changed her as a person, taught her to become emotionally detached and to understand that she was able to do it. She states: 'The counselling helped me to understand that actually I could do it ... I did have the resources and what I was frightened of was really just myself. I was worried about letting myself down and really what was I having to prove and who was I having to prove it to? And it was just this inner fear, this inner fear of letting myself down'. She now looked at the task as a personal challenge. Having gone through all the angst and come out the other side, she states: 'I was still very anxious about how we were going to succeed, but I was now able to reconcile those feelings in my own mind'. Now, she felt, she had the personal resources to 'be able to lead strongly from the front'.

Regarding the quality of life for the headteachers of failing schools, headteacher C maintains that issues like health and the work-life balance become extremely important. She states: 'I did work long hours and I had a young family; two children both at primary school and I needed to be there for them. Headteachers are placed under such enormous pressure that you are not able to do anything other than school, especially in the early days. I didn't have time to be able to get on with any paperwork or strategic thinking or planning. I couldn't leave the school to go to meetings, not at all. If I did there would be a major crisis and I would have to return'.

Leading out of and beyond special measures

The school was removed from special measures less than two years after being placed in that situation. Headteacher C maintains that once removed, the culture and leadership of the school changed again. She states: 'I couldn't, and the school couldn't, continue at that pace of change, we did what we had to do, we did it, we were seen to do it, we were deemed not to be in need of special measures any more'.

The headteacher describes the school moving from a culture predominantly hallmarked by a sense of urgency and prescription, one lacking opportunity to stand back and reflect. These features lessened during the journey of special measures and they became increasingly less evident as the headteacher and staff moved things forward. She states: 'We were able to celebrate successes'. She maintains that eventually the school returned to its shared values, with a team focused on principle and learning. She states: 'Our values were always there ... but it was more of a luxury' (during special measures). She continues: 'I suppose if we are drawing analogies, we were on a speedboat in special measures ... don't much care about the route that we are taking, just do it... Everybody is in the boat, if somebody falls off don't wait for them. There was a frenetic get on with it. After that we were on a nice sailing ship and we could stop and take in the view ... still getting to the destination, but having the luxury of being able to have time to get there and to stand back and reflect'.

Reflecting on how headteachers can reconcile their core values with pursuing the agenda of action plan recovery, the headteacher maintains that compromise was inevitable. She states: 'any ideals or clear principles that I had ... they didn't completely go out of the window. What I never lost sight of, or I hope I never lost sight of, was the fact that these are children's lives that we are talking about ... helping them to grow as individuals and that underpinned everything that I did ... I don't think we did lose sight of that, but the agenda was very clear, and there were things that I didn't want particularly to have to do, but we just had to get on and do'. She alludes to it 'becoming a game and the more that I learnt about the system, the more that I found out about it all, I realised that actually what I said or what the governors said, or what we did, and what we showed and what we didn't show, all played a part in how quickly we could move on'. Asked directly if this was collusion she states: 'We could collude, yes, and I think that did happen because I became

far more aware of what it was they (HMI) were looking for ... yes, there were clear criteria for visits and I made absolutely sure that I shared that (with staff) and I knew then we would get ticks in boxes'.

Appendix 10

Case study D

Context – inspection and report

School D is an average sized school with around 260 infant pupils on roll. There are nine classes with three in each year group. It is situated in a large town in southern England and pupils come from a broad range of socio-economic backgrounds. The number eligible for free school meals is just under 10%. Around one third of pupils have SENs and a very small number speak English as a second language.

In January 1998, headteacher D was seconded to a supportive leadership role in the school as the acting deputy headteacher. The school had failed its OfSTED in the late summer. She was appointed to the substantive post of headteacher in the autumn of the following year, this being her first headship. She regards the decision to place the school in special measures as being fully justified. Some governors considered that the RgI had been very harsh on the governing body and that some of the other judgements were unfair. However, headteacher D does not agree with this assessment and believes that if anything the report was generous. The LEA offered the same viewpoint, that the inspection report could have been a lot worse.

Headteacher D regards the former culture of the school (at the time of failing) as complacent and coasting, the school having had an excellent reputation for many years. Concerns were being expressed by parents and staff in the school – ‘grass-roots level’, although the then headteacher and the senior management team, consisting of three senior staff (there being no deputy headteacher), all felt the school was performing well. Interestingly, headteacher D maintains there was more of a spotlight on the poor relationships between the school, the senior staff and the parents than on the standards. The inspection focused on the communication that had begun to lapse because of the pressure that the then headteacher was under regarding standards and performance. She could not communicate with parents effectively because she was on the defensive. This eventually impacted on what had previously been efficient communication.

Headteacher D maintains that the former headteacher's understanding of an effective school was not in tune with the reality of the then wider educational culture. Certainly some teachers had followed her lead, although others had previously recognised that the school was under-performing. Headteacher D considers that this was the cause of the initial conflict in the staff team. These events led to a significant number of the school's personnel leaving and teamwork became non-existent. Conflict then centred on competing perceptions of the school's performance. Hence, the school's culture prior to the inspection is described by headteacher D as 'chaotic'. Some teachers had walked out and staff were in dispute with each other. There were also parents hammering on the door to express their dissatisfaction. The school had failed to look at its own performance in any way and it was unable to compare itself to what was happening in other local schools or nationally. A lack of reflection, self-evaluation and an outward gaze meant that those within the school had not seen that standards in other schools had changed for the better. Headteacher D believes that some teachers were in denial about what was happening. One teacher in particular was a strong influence on others. She was in denial and that was a difficult issue for headteacher D to deal with. This accordingly had a very negative influence on other staff, as well as the new members of staff that were joining the school. Because this continued for some time, it was perceived as being a huge obstacle. Even while she was on long-term sickness, she still maintained contact with the school and this could be quite damaging.

The inspection report (following the inspection) presented the school with seven key issues.³⁰ Headteachers D states that these were 'quite woolly to us. They didn't lead us down the road, necessarily, that we needed to go'. The report lacked clarity and the headteacher maintains that this did not help the school to build a vision for progress. It adequately highlighted what was wrong but seemed to lack the specificity needed to enable the school to move forward in a focused and purposeful way. Headteacher D states: 'for example, we knew that assessment was an issue, the specifics of where the problem lay ... exactly how it could then be addressed was not getting through to the school as it should'.

³⁰ Key issue writing is something that OfSTED subsequently worked to improve – in terms of clarity. There was the danger that key issues were not helpful in charting a progress of improvement – being top down and without the necessary clarity. Consequently, there was the danger that schools could proceed on a tightly constructed and almost contractual course of action, without the necessary bottom-up understanding.

Leading through a period of failure

Headteacher D was involved in constructing the action plan in her role as the seconded deputy headteacher. Having only just commenced her post, she found this difficult as the plan was required by OfSTED within an extremely short period of time. This difficulty was compounded by the fact that she had, at that time, no real picture of the situation and the plan could not therefore be grounded in the considered reality of the school. She concludes that on reflection the quality of the action plan was quite poor, and that at the time she felt she was not writing an effective plan that would help the school. She states: 'Until you know the context of the school, I don't think you can effectively write a good plan to lead those actions forward'. At the time she also felt that the school's leadership was not sufficiently skilled in action planning. She considers that the profession has now generally improved in this important aspect of school management and improvement.

Many parents had already taken their children away from the school by the time of the inspection. Two years before, the school had been full to capacity, and with a waiting list. By the time of the inspection they had only taken around 62 names for the 90 possible places available in year R for the following year. Following the inspection, and attendant press reports, the school lost a few more pupils, although by then the damage had already been done. The school held a meeting for parents following the failure and this was attended by over 100 parents (normally such meetings would attract around three). Headteacher D states 'feelings were running, very, very high'. She recalls that after the meeting the local vicar had a physical fight with one of the parents. She states: 'He physically grabbed hold of a parent and was threatening him and had to be pulled away from the parent ... it was very, very charged – and I think the action plan really was not their priority. They were dealing with the critical issues of the moment and it was absolute chaos'.

Leading through a period of recovery

Headteacher D maintains that the most effective parts of the action plan were the sections dealing with systems that could be put in place no matter what else was happening. There had been no system for monitoring progress and the standards of achievement. A programme of classroom observation was therefore established, along with procedures

for sampling children's work. These eventually provided the necessary information about how the school was improving. Headteacher D states: 'We just forged ahead with systems, systems for assessment, systems for planning, systems for getting the governing body up and running so they knew what they should be doing'. The latter action involved planning meetings and getting committees in place, so giving the governors some ideas about their responsibilities. By doing this the headteacher led the school from being one in crisis management into one that was following an agenda for improvement. The establishment of systems did have the effect of considerably reducing the instabilities among the school's personnel. It essentially provided a framework in which staff could succeed and in which improvement could be allowed to flourish.

Following the inspection, the school underwent significant staff changes, with a high turnover of teachers. Between the first and second inspections, there were 25 different class teachers working in the school across the five classes. Only one teacher remained at the school from the time of the failure to the time when the school was re-inspected and given 'a clean bill of health'. Reasons for leaving varied. Some left because of the stress of the inspection and the feeling that they had personally failed. Although that may not have been the case, they still tended to take it quite personally. Some teachers left when they were put onto informal 'support' (the first stage of the LEA's competency procedure) others were taken down the competency route before they eventually left. Headteacher D states: 'So there was a mixture of reasons why people left, but I would say again that the positives outweigh the negatives as far as the inspection goes'. Headteacher D maintains that the inspection needed to happen and that those people who left made it easier for the improvement of the school overall. Some had remained too closely identified with the history of the school and this meant that they just could not move on. The headteacher states: 'They needed to come out (of the school) and go back into the profession elsewhere'.

Recruitment of new staff was problematic and the headteacher records that just getting people through the door was difficult. She states: 'It's the concept of what special measures means. I think often it means, to people out there, (that) there is total chaos, there is total chaos in the classrooms and the children are badly behaved and all of those sorts of things and it's a very depressing environment; which actually when they come in and walk round it isn't necessarily the case'. The school did attract some teachers, who

really wanted the challenge, but mainly it had the opposite effect and more potential teachers were discouraged. However, the headteacher maintains that they attracted some good quality teachers because of the difficulties; those who were seeing the challenges as a positive benefit for their own development and their careers.

Headteacher D's practice of leadership was direct and practical and this won the hearts and minds of those around her. She states: 'It's about being in the classroom as much as you can. I spent a long time in the classroom with the teachers working alongside (them)'. However, this was not always engaged in classroom observation and headteacher D's monitoring was far more than clipboard monitoring. She states: 'we'd (teacher and headteacher) plan lessons together and I'd take a group and we'd evaluate it together afterwards'. She believes that an obligation to improvement should be a shared responsibility and that this practice contributed to raising staff morale. She maintains that teachers need the benefit of the opportunity for a professional dialogue about their lessons. She considers this conversation and joint reflection to be a necessary ingredient for sustaining the required improvement. The headteacher believes that teachers can only do that if there is somebody else in the room who is looking as well. But this has to happen in a less threatening way.

Headteacher D recounts that there was one particular teacher who was in total denial about the quality of her teaching. This required a different approach. It still involved sharing the planning of lessons, but the headteacher did many more formal observations of her work. Headteacher D states: 'Her confidence was very, very low and so I felt that I had a duty to do something about that really. And all the time that she was working against me and not accepting the help that was being given ... she wouldn't let me help her'. The headteacher thought carefully about formal capability procedures, as she was being advised to go in that direction by the LEA personnel service. However, she was also advised not to proceed with more than two competency procedures at any one time. This meant prioritising, something that the headteacher regarded as being unfair to the teachers in the circumstances. In the end, priority was given to a teacher where there were health and safety issues in the classroom. Headteacher D states: 'It was easier to improve the quality of teaching than it was to really improve the quality of learning or the standards, that took a lot longer'.

In considering the role of the governors, headteacher D recalls that many of the governors appeared quite shocked by what was happening. They seemed to have had no idea of what really was going on in the school, to the point of initially doubting the report. Following the inspection a number of governors left, but again this was about denial more than anything else. But some felt let down by a person whom they had trusted (former headteacher) and considered that they had not been given the information about the school at the time. They began to realise that they had failed in their strategic and monitoring role, although at the time that was not as well understood as it later became. Considering their development since then, headteacher D states: 'They (now) have a better understanding of the context of the school as well, but also they've developed their own skills in questioning and knowing what it is they need to know and how to find out'.

Parental confidence in the school grew throughout the period of special measures, to the point when the school was once again full to capacity. The headteacher carefully managed the flow of information during this time. She ensured that parents were kept fully apprised of the HMI reports, often in summary form, and of the school's landmarks of progress. Judicious use was made of the local press and this proved to be a powerful mode of communication to the local community. Headteacher D states: 'I think we talked a lot of the community round through the paper. We also had lots and lots of opportunities for parents to come in and see things which were, on the surface, good things to see'. This produced a generally positive feel towards the school.

Accessing the contribution of external agency

Headteacher D is upbeat about the part played by HMI in the school's recovery. Consistency was achieved through the same HMI visiting each term. She knew the school's base-line and this set the expectation about that which the school should have achieved by the time of her next termly visit. Headteacher D states: 'She was a very perceptive lady. I think she probably learnt more about the school in the two days she was here, on her own, than four people (the OFSTED inspection team of contract inspectors) did in four days – very perceptive'. The school still found the termly visits incredibly stressful, although they were not to prove to be such an ordeal for the headteacher herself. This she believes was due to her not having been the headteacher when the school went into special measures and so she did not feel ultimate responsibility for the school's

predicament. The HMI gave clarity to the school's direction, and where the report had failed to exemplify, she was able to fill the gaps. Headteacher D states: 'She gave us the specifics, she set the expectation and she did reward our successes'. She continues: 'The steps she set were achievable and so there was more frequent reward'.

The active involvement of the LEA began in the period leading up to the school's inspection, although even at this stage their understanding of the school's plight was limited. There were concerns from the LEA, as well as within the school, that there would be issues about the management and leadership of the school, especially with regard to the role of the then headteacher. Even so, headteacher D believes that the LEA's intervention came too late. The headteacher went off on long-term sickness in the summer before the school's autumn OfSTED inspection, although there was not then an expectation that the school would land in special measures. Standards were camouflaging the real state of the school. On the surface matters were fine, although it was subsequently known that there was actually a lot of under-performance and under-achievement.

It was during the period of recovery that the LEA became most active and possibly added the most value to the enterprise of improvement. Headteacher D had been at the school for two terms and had begun to get a view of the school. It was at this juncture that she began to form a productive partnership with the school's AI. He acted as a gatekeeper for other LEA departments, including personnel services, financial services and governor services.

During the recovery the school did not use or employ external agencies or consultants. However, links with headteacher colleagues (or in reality a lack of those links) highlighted the specific and potentially damaging difficulty that headteachers do not seem to absent themselves from their schools when in special measures. Headteacher D states: 'There isn't time to network and that's actually quite sad I think, and I don't think it's necessarily the answer. I think actually I might have gone out a bit more, it would have helped, there would have been more positives than the negative of losing the time if you like. It was the time definitely, it was the prioritising. But yes, local headteachers I knew at that point were very supportive'.

Personal survival during the period of special measures

Headteacher D highlights the emotional cost and importance of the preservation of self. She acknowledges the stress of being in special measures and maintains that the pressure on her time was a lot more intense, although she candidly states: 'I'm not exactly sitting around doing nothing at the moment'. There is the problem of trying to prioritise, especially from the varying demands for meetings with governors and others. There were so many things needing to be dealt with quickly. The pace for improvement has to be fast, but it also has to be right for there are so many aspects of the school's work to improve. Headteacher D accordingly considers that the time was stressful. However, she believes that for her, the guilt of the school being in the position of special measures was lessened by the fact that she was not the headteacher at the time of the failure. Therefore she was perceived as part of the solution rather than as part of the problem. Nevertheless, she maintains that it can be quite hard for a headteacher in trying to praise and motivate the staff in all the positive aspects of their practice.

Headteacher D maintains that she found the role of leading a school in special measures to be quite lonely, especially as previously she had been used to working in the companionship of teams. So surviving special measures became crucial through the course of headteacher D's leadership. She states: 'There were key people who I turned to and they were outside the school initially, because I didn't have the people inside'. She remained motivated by the regularity and reassuring nature of the HMI visits. The positive contribution of the AI's visits also provided an external reward. The headteacher discloses that she is 'a determined person, but that one has to keep reminding oneself of that for which you are aiming and of that which is right. Although sometimes you do need to question how you are getting there'. But she maintains that 'the key to survival really was just finding one or two colleagues who could move forward with you, and they formed the core'. She continues: 'You really just can't do it on your own and so I think I would hang on to one or two good practitioners who could move things forward with me. But you have to be careful with that because I think we are in danger of overloading those people'.

Leading out of and beyond special measures

Headteacher D maintains that the school came out of special measures at a point that may be described as 'improving but quite confused'. She continues: 'We were still in a state of confusion I think, because we followed this direction, we knew where we were going, but at that point we were beginning to question things like the literacy strategy for example, because all this happened at around the same time and we were then quite reflective about what was good practice and what we were wanting to achieve'. It was at this point that the school was beginning to understand effective practice, but they actually wanted to put their own interpretation on what that practice appeared to them to be. Headteacher D states: 'We wanted to spread our wings a bit and not just toe the party line'.

Headteacher D's description of the school's new culture was of one that was much more stable and happier to work in. She no longer felt the same tension as earlier and the culture was more about people becoming reflective for themselves. A feature of this was the growth of pedagogic dialogue, for she states: 'There are (now) always conversations in the corridors about how did that go in your class, oh it was terrible, we should have done it like this. You walk round the school on any day after school and there are those sorts of conversations where people casually land in each other's classrooms. But I think it's really important that they do that'. She maintains that they are doing this in their year-based teams, from which they derive so much benefit. The school's personnel share the workload and the resources of the school. What had begun as enforced practice, for example half-termly moderations, now became embedded willingly in the life and work of the school.

A significant change is that staff now exercised their professional discretion, which previously they had felt unable to do. Headteacher D states: 'Suddenly we had this luxury, if you like, of being able to make our own decisions a bit more, and that was quite unsettling really, because we had to ensure that our professional judgement was right. (The) decisions we were making, nobody was questioning really from outside. Suddenly no one was looking over your shoulder'.

The headteacher maintains that there is a difference between leading schools in special measures and schools that are beyond that position. She states: 'Some of the principles are

the same as any school, it's about improving schools ... (but) in some ways it's easier, it's more clear-cut in special measures, you know assessment is no good and it's got to get better'. Beyond special measures, the goals become a bit less defined. Headteacher D states: 'Once you get on the leading edge things are less well defined, a bit fuzzier'.

Headteacher D's leadership approach became different beyond special measures. She believes she is now more democratic. She defines her former approach as that of a more transactional leader, looking at an issue on her own and then telling people what had to be done about it. Now, by contrast, she is working more through other people. She offers the example of looking at performance data, debating what it means, and then signing people up to what they need to do because they can see it for themselves. The culture is much different now, and that has been the key to changing it.

Appendix 11

Case study E

Context

This Church of England aided primary school (E) is situated in a particularly affluent locality of a small cathedral city in the south of England. The school is a smaller-than-average primary with a very low number of pupils entitled to free school meals. There are few, if any from the ethnic minorities. The school has a broadly average number of pupils with SENs, although a higher-than-average number of children with statements of SENs.

The school, which dates back to the 19th century, was the first in its locality to 'fail' an inspection. During the first inspection by OfSTED in 1997 it was considered to have serious weaknesses. Less than a year later it was placed in special measures by HMI, and finally removed eighteen months after that. Subsequently it was re-inspected (contact inspection) after a further two years and the results, as measured on the four PANDA dimensions, were positive overall.

Headteacher E was appointed to this, his first headship, some five years before the judgement of special measures. He is distinctive within this study in that he experienced the process of failing: 'every step of it along the way', being the headteacher before, during and after the event of failure. He is a highly reflective headteacher, who states: 'By the time you get to the end of your career ... you'll be able to ... make some kind of sense of it. I'm beginning to, not for recriminations ... but because it is actually fascinating understanding OfSTED and all these different procedures and processes ... I can very much see the benefits that have happened ... but a strong element feels why this school. ... I think we were very much on a par with many, many, many primary schools'.

The school was first inspected early in the first national inspection cycle. The headteacher maintains that at this time inspections had a particularly critical edge (this he bases on his experience of his later inspection where there was dialogue between school and inspection team). Headteacher E believes that his approach to the first inspection (placing the school

in serious weaknesses) was, with hindsight, ill-considered. He states: 'I think we handled the inspection process very badly. We were completely naïve ... the buzz phrase was don't go out of your way to prepare ... Let your school speak for itself. I felt we had enough to speak to everybody, and we didn't. We didn't play any kind of games at all'. He considers that he 'didn't explain the complexity of the school properly'. To this he adds serious doubts about the tenor of the inspection, believing it was a 'humiliating' experience, 'something that was done to us', and 'a sledgehammer to crack a nut'.

Leading through a period of failure

At the time of the first inspection, the headteacher believed that the team judgements were 'completely wrong'. The school had recently appeared in the national press as one of the top schools in the country (based on national test results). The section 23 report (church school inspection) stated that the school had a strong ethos, had successfully completed an ambitious building programme and was an exemplary church school. So in essence there was a strong feeling of injustice at the decision of OfSTED. The headteacher states: 'That's not to deny that there were still things wrong, but that's how I felt at the time and that's how everybody felt ... the community, the parents, governors, a vast array of people felt this was wrong'.

Essentially the school failed on the quality of its teaching and the standard of the children's work and progress. Headteacher E now believes, within the wider context of 1990s reform, and in the light of his own professional journey and growth, that this was a fair and reasonable judgement. He himself was criticised for complacency, and, in retrospect, he admits that he took his 'eye of the ball', being busy fund-raising, and not focusing on pedagogy and the curriculum. Nevertheless, he states: 'I think that most schools were on exactly the same path ... it was the start of a journey ... headteachers were just learning monitoring techniques. ... just undergone target setting training ... all these different initiatives were just coming in'.

Headteacher E describes the process as being like a 'bereavement'. He states: 'My whole life had gone really'. Blame fell on two teachers in particular, one with retirement pending, both of whom the headteacher considered 'successful' in their contexts. He states: 'At the time I felt, and I think a lot of people did, that there were horses for courses. (School E)

was a particular kind of school, it had an image of being a prep school on the state.... My predecessor had done a very good job to get a lot of that out. My job was to finish that process'. But he maintained that this had to be done in an orderly manner, 'otherwise you'd have chaos, people going and so on'. However, through resignation and retirement key appointments were made, although recruitment was difficult due to the status of the school and the calibre of people required.

At this time, there were a series of parents' meetings. Of these, the most significant was one held after the school was judged to have serious weaknesses. The headteacher feels that this was a critical moment for him with regard to keeping his job, as well as commanding the moral authority necessary to lead the process of recovery.

During this period a few parents removed their children, although, due to the popularity of the school others soon filled the vacant places. Overall, parental support was resolute and some parents mounted a rearguard action, which sought to discredit the process and the inspection report. This fervour was tempered by headteacher E who cautioned and called for a far more circumspect response. The eventual result was that the school gained a more inclusive intake. The headteacher maintains that this was something from which 'we benefited in the long term'.

The process of action planning was primarily top down. The headteacher admits to being 'quite zombified' and not much help at the time. For him, this represented a low point as he struggled to come to terms with what was happening. The LEA established a task group to compile the plan, although the headteacher states: 'You can imagine that trying to write an action plan by committee wasn't too successful'. Following this less than successful attempt, the group was re-constituted, and with the full compliance of the headteacher, and on the second attempt, a realistic plan was formulated. The headteacher states: '(the LEA officer) brought me back to life I guess in that process. From then we had something to work on and we were away, and from that point I don't think we really looked back'.

The governors were also involved in the planning through the curriculum committee, although the staff were too preoccupied pedagogically. Nevertheless, they unconditionally

accepted the plan. The headteacher states: 'They were so willing to be told ... (they stated) "if somebody knows please tell us" '.

Leading through a period of recovery

As the school and headteacher moved beyond the lowest point of failure there were positive affirmations of recovery, although in the mind of the headteacher there remained some doubts. These were not related to the validity of the inspection findings, but the stark necessity of the judgements and their ramifications. Headteacher E states: 'Maybe because we'd improved quite a lot ... at that certain point, and when ... new people (new members of staff) came in they were seeing the school and their colleagues working at this level ... and they were saying "well the school down the road is a Beacon school, the school down there is that, and there is not actually any difference really" ... they wouldn't dream of saying that unless it was partially true'.

In equally reflective vein he states: '(I had) taken what I believe now to be a wrong decision, that the school would introduce initiatives steadily, slowly and carefully because we were a small school ... I don't hold that viewpoint at all any more. I don't look at us, you know, I don't call us a small school, I don't treat it as a small school, we are a school and we have to be at the forefront of all the initiatives'. With regard to specific changes, made during this period of recovery, he states: 'I've now learnt to run efficient systems I suppose ... in the OfSTED we were failing in those terms, we're now not, we've learnt how to do those very effectively'.

One of the key issues of the inspection was the quality of teaching and this in itself was being redefined, at the time, by the implementation of the national strategies for literacy and numeracy. Headteacher E states: 'At the end everybody had got a very clear concept of what good teaching (is) ... so (from) the teacher training point of view, they all had to, they really did benefit from learning how to teach the literacy hour lesson and to teach numeracy lessons and so on, and to do that, and that benefited, you know, made their teaching solid, gave it structure'. By the end of the HMI process, the school was able to make its own adjustments and customisations.

Throughout the period of recovery the governors remained steadfast in their support of the headteacher.

Accessing the contribution of external agency

The headteacher acknowledges that he had an ambivalent relationship with HMI, which he regarded as a duel. He states: 'He (the HMI) was winding me up from the beginning ... now you think, well OK that's probably him being very shrewd, him trying to get me going and trying to provoke. One of his (HMI's) classic statements is: "... well of course you don't need to do any teaching in Key Stage 1, all your children get level 3 anyway". It's absolutely preposterous, a lot of our children do get level 3s then and now through very good teaching and very careful planning.... But those were the sort of statements that HMI were making to me all the time... I suppose he actually taught me to argue'.

The headteacher regards the system of termly visits of HMI positively. He states: 'It was crucial that they, or somebody, built up a picture of the reality of the school and didn't have this cosy image of it'. He maintains that this gave them a more realistic picture of the children with whom the school was dealing.

As to whether HMI have an agenda – a blueprint for getting out of special measures, the headteacher states that generally this is not the case, although he adds: 'They were wanting a particular agenda for this school and I think that they were challenging us to do anything that we could, they were giving us licence, if you like, at the end of the process to do completely different things'. Headteacher E provides an example of HMI challenging the school to be more experimental by questioning the necessity, for them, of implementing the literacy and numeracy hours. However, the headteacher retorts: 'We were going to introduce the literacy hour, we were going to do numeracy, but of course we were going to scroll up as the jargon has now become. Teach at a high level'.

The headteacher credits HMI with seeing what the school was planning to do in order to broaden the curriculum and employ greater expertise. He states: 'HMI thought these things were fantastic and they thought this was the way schools should be going ... I was delighted to do it, something I wouldn't have done before'. He declares that HMI

instigated a culture of carefully considered experimentation, stating: 'I love ... trying out new things'.

The headteacher reports that the LEA was stunned at the inspection decisions. However, as to whether the LEA knew enough about the school before, the headteacher considers that while the long-serving AI/adviser knew a lot at 'a certain level', this was not penetrating enough to meet the demands of the educational reforms of the 1990s. He states: 'I think she knew an awful lot about the teachers and the school and we were probably of the same mind-set that said, actually the teachers I've got at this school were working well for the situation that we were in, OK, but not right perhaps for a changing world'.

Following initial HMI visits, both the LEA and Diocese became concerned as to the school's prospects for removal from special measures. The headteacher was summoned by the Diocese and told: 'Come on, should you be going now. Only the right person can finish this off, it's not convincing enough'. However, self-attested determination ensured that his confidence in the path he was taking never wavered.

The school made no use of external consultants or HE, although networking with colleagues became very important, and the headteacher felt well supported by them. However, he states: 'You feel as if you're being sacrificed for the benefit of the education service itself ... you could feel that this was just an opportune moment in the process of education, that (school E) would be very good to raise standards across the county. And by golly what happened to (school E) raised standards in (the city). It made the LEA, it made every headteacher get panic stricken'. As a result headteacher E talked to colleagues about the pedagogy that existed at the heart of the inspection process, and they in turn sought further training in groups and clusters 'on what a good lesson looks like, and how to monitor'. He states: 'Whether this is part of the denial process, I'm not sure ... all those things that I was weak in, colleagues immediately improved'.

Headteacher E reflects that if there is anything that he has learnt from the process, it is that 'I'm a master games player'. He states: 'The HMI said to me, "You won't get out of special measures by jumping through hoops", well in fact it's completely untrue, you just jump higher and disguise the hoops you're jumping through and manipulate the games

even more'. He maintains that while he was naive at the beginning of the process, by the end it was as if they were 'going into battle, and the inspectors were going to come out worst'.

Personal survival during the period of special measures

Headteacher E's personal motivation and character is a strong element of his survival. He admits that his confidence was never shaken, although he did take the precaution of investigating alternative avenues of employment: 'that's because I have a family and a mortgage'. He almost exudes an enthusiasm borne out of the adversity. He states: 'They (we) were so keen just to want to do it ... we really saw ourselves at the forefront of something, of learning what good teaching's about, and if I have any strength my main strength is in team building, working as a team'. Reflecting with his team on their memories of the process, he states that they themselves verify these comments in stating: 'What a fantastic team we were, weren't we good, wasn't it great'. He also reports one member stating: 'Above all that pain ... we were alive, it's the most alive you might be in your life actually'.

A 'good work-life balance' is something that the headteacher feels he achieved prior to the school failing. However, he castigates himself by stating: 'That might have been a failing ... maybe, I don't know, I wasn't devoting enough to the job'. When the school was placed in special measures his life changed from being fairly work-orientated all of the time, to becoming totally work-orientated. He states he has since been able to retrieve the work-life balance: 'I'm just beginning to get some of that back'. He exhibits resilience in such statements as: 'I don't want sympathy from anybody. My family didn't give me any sympathy, nobody gave me any actually, (they) very quickly learned not to ... (I was) just getting on with life'.

Nevertheless, headteacher E maintains that their being a church school helped by being linked to something bigger than just the local and educational community. The school, as a Christian organisation, formalised its prayer support groups, with staff coming in on Saturday mornings as a prayer support group because it was impracticable during lunchtime. The headteacher states: 'I guess my faith helped ... I think the faith of a group of people with us'. He states: 'The process teaches you to take time out and think about

the issues really'. During the interview he produced a bible passage (1 Peter 2, 18-25) focusing on the concept of unjustified persecution. He states: 'We did feel like a persecuted group ... we felt this was wrong, and you have to fight a wrong. So in your heart of hearts you may not know how wrong that is or whether (you are) trying not to deny it, but everybody would say ... there's no way actually this school should have been special measures compared to other schools'. In one particularly revealing statement he concludes: 'So this was a mechanism for coping with all of that really, to feel that you had been wronged in some way, even if the decision wasn't wrong'.

Leading out of and beyond special measures

In reflecting on his leadership during this journey of special measures, headteacher E states: 'I don't think my style of leadership has changed really, just the different directions I'm leading in ... being more focused as to what our purpose is about ... my aim would have been to keep a very good team of teachers working efficiently, making everything run smoothly.... Now my aim would be still to have all those things but it would be a completely different aim, in which I've said several times already about the high quality of teaching. And now I'm beginning to move away from that, actually making sure the children's learning is the best possible.... So I've taken my leadership in the same way of working with people ... it's the direction you're going in'.

The process of leading through special measures was clearly delineated hierarchically from above – through the direction of the external agency of the HMI, and in direct contrast to the practice that appertained beyond special measures. Now, the headteacher maintains, everybody is leading different areas and has to drive things forward. He contends that it is a measure as to how the profession has changed in that time, and the quality of the people that have been appointed. He sees the process as part of helping teachers to re-discover their sense of professionalism, through challenging themselves and the expectations of the status quo. He states: 'My Key Stage 2 teachers are both new this term and my main message to them is ... break out of the box, break out of the box, think about it'. Headteacher E now actively encourages the practice of discretionary professionalism among his staff. In turn, they reciprocate through the quality of their followership and in their practice of distributed leadership.

As to the future, the headteacher had originally seen a career move at around the time of the inspection that placed the school in special measures. That came at a time of having completed four years of headship and having had 'a fairly successful career'. The inspection changed everything; he states: 'that was my career structure knocked on the head ... the rug again was pulled under my feet'. He adds in retrospect that he has managed to rise to the challenge over the period of five years since that event. This has been because of the particular challenges that have had to be met: 'that I couldn't walk away from, I just could not'. He is acutely aware that people, such as governors, have demonstrated their loyalty to him. However, he adds: 'Now, I am now free, if you like, to go on. But there is one last thing and that is that we've now got this million pound building project starting in the New Year ... I really want to see that finished ... when that is done there is absolutely no reason why I should stay'. However, he does harbour doubts regarding his employability because of his professional history. He states: 'I also know that what I've been through is going to mean that many people will not want to interview me and I'm realistic about that' – so realistic that while the process proceeded he covered his back by trying to find and train himself into jobs outside education. He is, nevertheless, daunted at the prospect of beginning again: 'All those things probably help you fight a little bit harder in your profession because it wasn't the fact that I really wanted to leave, it was because I felt somebody might make me'.

He states: 'I can see myself as a headteacher in another school and I know I could do a good job'. As to whether that would be another school in difficulty he is uncertain, but he is nonetheless willing to use his experience. He states: 'I don't think there is any such thing as a school that is really up and running ... so actually I might go to a quite a comfortable school, I think that I could probably shake them quite a bit'. He reminisces about his experiences in a barn-dance band, recalling his own composition called "I used to be a blue-eyed boy until I fell from grace". Now, he states, this has taken on new significance: 'I'm suddenly thinking about all this stuff ... there is something almost semi-consciously, not really overtly written, it's completely about that whole situation ... I played it last night and I thought I'm not sure about that. Nearly taped it for you, but that's one bit of excruciating stuff too much'.

Appendix 12

Case study F

Context

This former primary school (school F – now closed) served a large council estate, along with some owner-occupied housing, on the edge of a large and affluent commuter town in the south of England. At the time of the inspection there were 200 pupils on roll.

The school first opened in 1953, in purpose-built accommodation, as an infant and junior school. In 1977 it became a first school, but reverted to its former status under local re-organisation in the early 1990s. It was situated in a relatively deprived locality, where initially there was little parental interest in educational matters. Few parents were professional and the percentage of parents with higher educational qualifications was relatively low. Around 40% of parents were eligible for free school meals and the figures for school attendance were below the national average. Headteacher F maintains that the area is deprived and surrounded by very affluent areas. She maintains that this ‘exacerbates how the people ... feel ... hard done by and big inverted chips on shoulders ... every time they go out on the estates it’s rubbed in more and more. So they get more defensive and angry about it, and volatile’.

Headteacher F was appointed to this, her first headship, in the summer of 1997. At that time there were no apparent concerns about the school from any external agencies. She stated; ‘No one seemed to know very much about the school, as such, except ... it seemed fine’. Her concerns, however, were triggered before she took up her appointment: ‘the term before ... I started to get concerned. When I was there, I could hear an awful lot of noise that I would not expect from classrooms’. However, ‘it wasn’t ‘till I got there and on the very first day, the first half-hour that I knew that one of the biggest issues there was behaviour, which was absolutely appalling and the children ruled the school’.

Leading through a period of failure

Headteacher F knew that the school was due an OfSTED inspection before taking up post. After a short period she judged that 'there was no way it wasn't special measures ... results were appalling'. This was, for the headteacher, a period of dawning reality: 'I actually doubted myself whether I could even manage it'. During the first week she had to cover for absent teachers in their classes. She states: 'I had never lost control of a class before, and the feeling that, well if I can't control them how can I expect my staff to control them ... Every class I took that week I lost control of ... nevertheless the support staff that were in there had said that they'd never seen the children behave so well'. This first week brought her to her first crisis point, thus affecting her self-belief. She stated that this was rescued by 'determination ... I'm not going to be beaten'.

Expectations were low. She states: 'In the earlier days there, I kept having people say, well what can you expect from children like this. And I said no, I'm sorry, I expect the best from children like this'. Nevertheless, there was some residue of understanding of effectiveness issues. She states: 'the saving grace there was that the staff knew what they should be doing ... but the behaviour was stopping them doing it'. However, she reports that the school's personnel remained positive, enthusiastic and committed, despite being disrespectfully treated almost every day by the children and parents. It was this that continually sapped their energies and thwarted their sense of professionalism. Headteacher F demonstrated her commitment in her practical support. She states: 'Because I was confronting this behaviour ... they seemed to think well that's great, no one is going to turn their back on us, someone's with us now and we can move forward'. Nevertheless, a lack of structures meant the essential life of the school was being curtailed.

The poor behaviour led to headteacher F taking a firm line on exclusions. At the end of her second week she excluded three children permanently. At the time her thoughts were: 'I've got to make a stand because I'm going to lose the school ... I'm not going to get it back unless parents, children, know I'm not going to put up with it'. In reflecting upon the notion of the crisis points of special measures that thereby defines how things move forward, headteacher F states: 'To me that was

one of those, because what message was it giving to those three children, and also to all the other children'. In this action the staff felt supported and this in itself provided a good basis for forward momentum.

At this time the governors were not proactive in leading and in gaining their own impressions of the school. They were unaware of the full predicament of its position and the implications of this. Headteacher F maintains that the governors were the 'old style of governors who had hearts of gold, but weren't really very involved'. Early in her headship they failed to support the headteacher in a disagreement with the LEA over the exclusion of pupils, and this eventually resulted in the chair resigning.

Headteacher F regards the inspection, occurring one term after her having taken up her post, as having been 'one rung on the ladder' to recovery. She regarded the inspection team as being extremely good and claims that they, in a perverse way, felt 'sorry' for school's evident plight. This, in turn, affected the tone and practice of the inspection, the team being non-threatening and understanding. She states: 'I think partly that was because they could see almost immediately the nature of the children; what the staff were up against and what a good job the staff were trying to do, but the children weren't allowing them to do'.

During the inspection, and in order to protect a NQT, the headteacher taught his class while he carried out small-group teaching, a strategy that was readily accepted by the inspection team. This led to the inspection statistics being better than they would otherwise have been. However, in doing this, she was unable to maintain the necessary overview demanded of a headteacher throughout the inspection. The headteacher maintains that the inspection did not tell them anything they did not previously know, although it verified their actions and planning thus far.

The post-inspection parents' meeting was attended by only nine parents, nevertheless it proved a defining moment. The headteacher believed that the presentation was to be all-important and that she should 'front' the meeting. She adds: 'If I am going to be a target then I'm a target', but, essentially her aim was to model the leadership of the school that could be expected from this point onwards

– a firm and resolute approach to leadership that they had not experienced hitherto. LEA representatives and the governors also attended the meeting. The content of the meeting focused on what had already been achieved, what would be done in the future, and the timeframe in which this would happen. The headteacher covered each key issue. She reports that by the time she had finished, the parents said: ‘You’ve done so much and it is so different just keep going, we’ve not got worries’.

Subsequently, the headteacher produced the action plan. She states: ‘Basically I drafted the main bullet points ... not in quite such detail. Then the staff and the governors did an INSET day using their own (because I had set them a holiday task) ... put them down for a bullet point brainstorm ... then came together with mine ... I adjusted it ... and produced it’. There was, however, some wider sense of ownership, even if there was a heavy loading on top-down actions. This she attributes to the staff team having been together, under the leadership of headteacher F, for two terms already. The headteacher states: ‘I led it, I did lead it quite considerably ... because the staff had never been involved in that sort of thing before ... but it was important that I could give them enough of the structure ... for them to feel that they had had a really successful input. I made sure that certain elements that perhaps hadn’t appeared in mine, did appear, because it came from them ... But I didn’t overburden them because they were overburdened every day’.

The headteacher acknowledges that the action plan provides an externally approved structure ‘that you need to stick to’. The first HMI monitoring report states: ‘The management has not allowed any difficulties to divert them ... from enabling the school to progress in line with its action plan’. Nevertheless, there is, the headteacher states, value in bringing in distinctive elements not recognised by the inspection. She gives an example: ‘working with parents ... it was a social aspect’.

Leading through a period of recovery

Headteacher F believes that there are particular qualities needed in leading recovery. She states: 'I think you have to be far more focused, not single minded, but far more focused ... a bit thick skinned'. She indicates that her leadership approach was very directive and this may be illustrated from the inspection. Firstly in her over-riding the LEA's strong recommendation regarding removing the NQT from the classroom during the inspection (mentioned above). Secondly, in statements about the inspection, e.g. 'I decided that that was not going to be the be all and end all, that it was just one step on the school development, and that's how I always viewed it, and that's how I made sure the staff tried to view it too'.

To improve the teaching and learning the headteacher went 'back to basics, to teaching styles, delivery, everything'. She states: 'We put in extra support staff ... activated them ... trained them up to support learning'. In so doing she focused on pride in achievement, including the academic, and this facilitated a significant cultural change throughout the formerly under-achieving, low-expectation school community.

During the interview, the headteacher made only one reference to her deputy headteacher. Nevertheless, HMI refer to the evident teamwork of the senior managers. The emphasis, at this time, was undoubtedly on people doing their jobs (e.g. subject co-ordinators). However, the wider agenda was that the headteacher was consciously and evidently building the capacity of her managers to manage, and in so doing, building their sense of professionalism.

A particular barrier at this time was a lack of financial resources. Even though headteacher F could envision the route to recovery, this fact was to hamper her. She states: 'I could have turned it around even more successfully if we had had a floating experienced teacher who could then take some of the pressure off myself, so that I wasn't always the one to be going in and pre-empting and rescuing and so on ... I could have spent some of my time ... to actually deal with what I should have been dealing with ... to help develop curriculum and things like that'.

However, budget was not the only consideration, the other was human resource. There was a reluctance among those suitable people who could work in the school.

In this leadership enterprise, children were at the heart of headteacher F's thinking. She states: 'Probably one of the biggest things the children felt ... is that no one bothered about them'. Her focus is thus summarised in her statement that 'through everything, all the things that we did, they knew, that no matter what, we cared about them and that we valued them, and they could stand with their heads held high. They were worth talking to and they were valued people, and they could be proud of themselves and their school'.

Accessing the contribution of external agency

The headteacher regards the role of HMI very positively, valuing their contribution as challenging. Of her HMI she states: 'She was excellent, really good ... someone I have ultimate respect for ... extremely perceptive, very astute, but extremely good with people; and, put staff at their ease, even the most fragile of staff'. Of the termly inspections, she states: 'I don't see it as a check-up. I know it is, but I don't see it as that. I see it as a reassurance, and, if we are slipping, or we're not doing as we should be, then they can put us on the straight road again'.

This she regards as very different in approach from OfSTED (contracted inspections). Although she concedes her team were sensitive and productive, there is, she maintains, a general understanding among the profession that 'OfSTED will come in and try and catch you out'. Conversely, HMI are 'there to help get you out if possible, and as soon as possible'.

The school failed at a time when LEAs had become far less interventionist, following the requirements of the then marketisation agenda. Despite this, early in her headship, the LEA intervened (or interfered) in exclusions (mentioned above). This disagreement was, however, later resolved in favour of the school. After the inspection the LEA's role changed. The headteacher states: 'Basically they didn't attempt to take over; they took the lead from myself'. The LEA worked closely with the school, having meetings, frequent visits and more immediate access to key

personnel. As to whether the LEA added value to the process, the headteacher is somewhat ambivalent.

The headteacher made no use of external consultants. Networking with other headteachers was very limited, this being particularly problematic because of the fragile state of the school. Supply teachers were reluctant to come into the school and so classes had to be split. Headteacher F states: 'I couldn't leave the school, like headteachers' meetings or anything. I never went, daren't leave, there was no way I could leave'.

Personal resilience during the period of special measures

The headteacher maintains that surviving special measures demands 'a great deal of determination'. She demonstrates her educational values in stating: 'You have to have a very strong character ... but what keeps me going ... is the children. I know in the long run it's for them that I'm doing it'. She demonstrates that the sheer hard work and pressure of leading schools in special measures are rewarded by small incidents. This is evident in comments such as: 'I might be going through sheer hell for a whole week or whatever, and some times you think am I really making a difference here, but then some little thing like: "am I being helpful?" (a comment from a child). (I think) I'm getting there, it might take years but I will get there'. She continues: 'They are very small things, but yet we've got to recognise them as a step forward'.

Regarding work-life balance, the headteacher maintains that family and personal life are casualties of the demands, which she believes to be 'unreasonable'. She states: 'There were times when I felt like saying, sorry but it's not worth it because your health does suffer'. As to whether she would have contemplated walking away from the situation, Headteacher F comments: 'I couldn't do it (walk away) for the children or the staff ... but you do think a lot of times, what am I doing to myself and my life, I have one life, and the hours that are put down as the average hours of a headteacher's working week are absolutely ridiculous when you're in special measures'. She also postulates the notion that returning to 'normal headship' from this intensity can be problematic. It is not just the process of catching up, but also

the challenge of readjustment to the common working practices and the usual professional behaviours of primary headship.

As to whether headteachers can become 'addicted' to special measures (this headteacher went on to lead a second school in special measures), headteacher F comments: 'I suppose it can become like a safety net can't it? I think you have to be a person who in general life loves challenges'. She believes that undoubtedly special measures can deliver that challenge, with its attendant structures (like tightly prescribed action planning), 'on a plate'. In contemplating her future she states: 'I would not look for a headship in a beacon school (or) ... a very successful school, because to me there is one direction that that school could go in, which is down ... I like to look at an advert, or whatever, and think, I could make a difference there ... It's that challenge, but special measures is a rather extreme challenge and not one that I would choose necessarily'.

Leading out of and beyond special measures

Eventually the school was removed from special measures after only eleven months. The headteacher maintains that this was due firstly, to prior knowledge of the inspection outcome (and therefore more rapid acceptance of the judgement); secondly, to the commitment and belief of the staff team; and thirdly, to good strategic planning.

Headteacher F believes that in removing schools from special measures, HMI are looking for 'the structures and the systems operating, that will support an improvement ... whether it's standards of achievement or standards of behaviour or whatever ... I think they have to be reassured that all staff are appropriately involved in those structures and are taking their own individual role seriously and are responsible, actively responsible for their role ... they are looking to be convinced that the school itself has the capacity to sustain improvement without them checking up'. The headteacher indicates that being removed from special measures is as much, if not more about attitude than altitude (apparent achievements), 'almost the two C's – capacity and culture'. She states: 'The crux of the decision ... was whether they (school personnel) could 'talk the talk' with the

HMI and convince them that they were being proactive, that they were leading their subjects now, that they were monitoring, that the systems were in place and being used and that that would have the impact that would be necessary to further the improvement and continue it. The headteacher also maintains that HMI need to be convinced that the leadership will not change in the immediate future. She states: 'if that has been a large contributing factor in the downfall, then they don't really want to be taking it (the school) out with the knowledge that that leadership that has now made it pick up again is going to disappear in a very short time-span. I don't mean they say how long you are going to be here. But they've got to feel that that will continue'.

On regaining a normal pattern of school life and improvement, post special measures, the headteacher reports: 'It's pulling people out of that malaise, without overdoing it too soon'. The staff are liable to feel they are 'back in all the pressure again'. However, she maintains the school must continue to move on: 'It doesn't stop because we've come out, all schools develop and it's getting that balance right'.

In 2000, the school was finally closed under a further round of local re-organisation. The headteacher states that before the closure happened: 'We got better and better, and we got an improvement award to prove it'.

Appendix 13

Case study G

Context – inspection and report

This inner city primary school in the south of England, school G, caters for pupils from a wide socio-economic background. There are 230 on roll and 35% are entitled to free school meals. Forty per cent of pupils do not have English as their first language. Nearly one third of the pupils have SENs.

The headteacher joined the school in April 1998, the school having failed its inspection almost two years prior to this date. This meant it had already been in special measures for nearly the maximum period expected, with the attendant danger of enforced closure. During this time the school was caught-up in changes caused by the creation of a new unitary authority. It left its former shire county and became part of a city unitary authority in the summer of 1997. During that year very little happened and momentum was lost. Headteacher G claims that the previous failing culture of the school was accordingly being maintained throughout this period. The same school personnel remained for that whole year, and some of those staff were deemed to be part of the reason the school had failed.

When the new LEA came into existence they appointed their own inspectorate and started to work with the school and its staff. The previous headteacher left within a few months of the establishment of the unitary authority. Headteacher G states: 'The school failed and he (previous headteacher) lived with the failure for almost a year, but really didn't have the capacity to turn it around. He just didn't see it as failing'. The LEA seconded in one headteacher whose first job was just to set up a budget. Headteacher G states: 'She was parachuted in here and all she could do in the midst of what was "catastrophic mayhem" (her words) was set up a budget. There wasn't one, a (properly structured) budget didn't exist'. The school appeared to be living 'hand to mouth'. It was heavily over-staffed, and there was no real management or understanding of roles and responsibilities. Later, a second headteacher was 'parachuted in', following the previous secondee, and he started to look at the staffing issues.

The third headteacher to assume the post was headteacher G. He inherited an extremely difficult situation, for, he claims, the OfSTED inspection had significantly misrepresented the school's situation. He further maintains that the inspection that had placed the school in special measures, had, if anything, been overly generous: 'they (the team) bent over backwards to be kind'. The serious issues that were not exposed in the OfSTED inspection had left him in a position of weakness in endeavouring to change the expectations and the culture of the school. He states: 'that's what I had thrown in my face time and time again when I wanted to change things, "It was alright at the OfSTED". I've had it again this year, when I was trying to up the ante yet again ... when I'm asking for more change.... Moreover they (the team) said some things there (the report) of a positive nature that are not true. Standards in reception (the year group) ... when I arrived here (were) appalling (yet) reception got a nice little write-up'. Headteacher G identifies a drift and lack of action by the LEA, who did not fully identify the seriousness of the situation. He states (from the example of an LEA report, prior to the inspection): 'In no way did it ever intimate that this school would fail an OfSTED ... that report is used by people who were here then to justify their denial. Even the LEA didn't know'. He does state: 'There wasn't the frighteners around to make sure things are right. There were no frighteners around for this school to feel that it could happen to us'.

Leading through a period of failure

On the appointment of headteacher G, there was intense denial of the seriousness of the situation by everybody within the school, from staff to governors. This made improvement a more difficult act to perform. Headteacher G maintains that the school had a 'fine reputation, and well deserved, for its community work and its management of behaviour'. He continues: 'But actually when I got here that had all fallen apart anyway'. The main weaknesses were standards, teaching (which was not monitored) and leadership. Headteacher G states: 'The teaching was not good, I know because I inherited some of that teaching and monitored it myself. The leadership was chaotic – there wasn't a structure to the leadership.... A very difficult curriculum to understand ... it wasn't working for too many staff. When the school had had a problem they sought to solve it by providing more staff and this had resulted in a significant number of inappropriate appointments without proper interviews. He continues: 'I'm not exaggerating people walking in and getting a job that day, and no financial management of any sort

whatsoever'. On his first visit, headteacher G was told by the financial officer that the school had a potential debt of £39,000 – over-against a budget of almost £500,000.

Headteacher G reports that the environment of the school was appalling. The classrooms had not been painted in 18 years and it was not physically conducive to advancing a good quality of education for the children and the teachers. It failed to motivate and to inspire.

Behaviour in the school was a serious issue – 'appalling'. The headteacher reports that there were even shouting matches in the corridors between adults, some in front of the children. The behaviour had always been considered to be good, but headteacher G maintains that this was predicated upon capitulation to children. In reality the picture was one of a large number of children not behaving well and an approach that swamped the situation, with more adults taking the line of least resistance. In response the LEA put in a hard-line assertive discipline policy, although, he claims, staff were unable to apply it with the competence required and through the modelling that was necessary. In his words, the LEA, 'left a school that was dysfunctional to carry it out'. He continues: 'My first assembly, I'd never experienced it before, quite mind boggling, some of the teachers were shouting at the children'. He describes the scene as one where children were performing 'roly-polies, turning around, calling out ... there was a significant number of children and in the assembly hall, they were unable to access self-behaviour modification, they could not do it'.

Leading through a period of recovery

The action plan had already been produced when headteacher G arrived at the school. This was reviewed termly by a task force that had been set up by the LEA. This met in order to support and monitor the school through special measures (this involved an education officer, inspector/advisers, the chair of governors and a further governor, the headteacher, and a member of the LEA finance). Headteacher G maintains that the school personnel never had ownership of that action plan: 'it was an imposed plan really'.

The second headteacher seconded had addressed some staffing issues. These concerned the quality of the staff, although redundancy procedures were left for headteacher G to attend to. The seconded headteacher also looked at the quality of teaching and as a result

one teacher had departed. Shortly after headteacher G arrived, the deputy headteacher was 'persuaded' to go. It was she who had been covering for the original headteacher, this amounting to a camouflaging of the toxic culture that had existed. The persuasion, however, did not extend to other staff and shortly after headteacher G's arrival he was compelled to take two staff down the competency route. Headteacher G states: 'It was only when I came, and we began talking and we began moving teachers on. I'm not saying that's the right thing to do in all cases but here it was. Some teachers stayed, I wanted them to stay and some teachers really had to move on'. These difficult issues had not previously been addressed. There was consequently insufficient evidence available and inadequate modelling within the school for anything to have previously happened. Headteacher G states: 'No competency procedure would work in those situations'. He reports that some of the former staff is still meeting as a group, and some of the current staff meets with them. Headteacher G paraphrases their assumed attitudes in stating: 'They are still living in denial ... because we're all wrong, our inspectorate was wrong, OfSTED was wrong, I was wrong, inspectors I got in to deal with incompetency procedures were wrong, we're all wrong – still in denial'.

Headteacher G reports that at this time: 'My leadership style was a very coercive one. Because actually, although I was allowing people to access ownership if they wanted it, through good practice, the bottom line was we were going to do it anyway and everybody knew that ... that was the way it had to be and I think that is the strength of a headteacher going into a school that has failed. You can't afford the time to look at something in tremendous depth, you've got to go with what you know will work, what is good. Give people the opportunity to jump on board, but if they don't want to that's tough'.

Although the governors were shocked when the school failed, and many remained in denial for the first year, one or two 'clever and wise' people began to come out of that mind-set. The new LEA exercised its powers in appointing their own appointees to the governing body and the governors began to take on a new attitude and a new understanding of the school. The new members were able to handle the management of governance, and by the time the governing body interviewed headteacher G, he regarded them as 'a very professional outfit'. From that point he claims that he had an excellent

working relationship with the governing body; which for him had proved to be a learning journey in itself.

Staff retention did not prove to be a difficulty. If anything the opposite was the case and new staff members have remained with the school. The headteacher attributes this to the school now being 'a very friendly place, we're genuinely friendly.... Some schools can get Investors in People and be a ... awful place to work in, and that's the truth of it. I'm proud, and one of the things I will leave with pride is that's the place this genuinely is'.

After being placed in special measures the numbers on roll did not decrease, although it did adversely affect the number of incoming pupils for the following year. Headteacher G states: 'No one took their children away, an odd number, less than ten I would guess, but reception numbers were small, you are talking of 16/18 because people did not want to send their children here'. This has now been reversed and confidence in the school has been restored.

Accessing the contribution of external agency

Unsurprisingly HMI were concerned as the school had been in special measures for so long. At the time of headteacher G's appointment it was nearly in its third year of special measures and there was no obvious evidence, to the HMI, that that was going to end sooner rather than later. This represented a situation where the school could have been closed. Headteacher G reports that: 'HMI said that to me very early on in our relationship. You've got a very big job here to do because it's got to be done and reasonably quickly. But he said don't panic, just do what you want to do, talk to me and think it through, use the task force'.

Headteacher G maintains that HMI added value to the enterprise, although he recognises that he is speaking from the limitation of his experience. Effectively the visits were snapshots and judgemental rather than developmental. The visits were set in the context of the evidence from the last visit and in the light of the targets that were previously set. In a telling statement, relating to the authoritative and unequal relationship that existed with HMI, the headteacher states: 'When an HMI runs the school they take the key objectives of the failing OfSTED, basically they tend to run through so that each time

they're updated'. He reports that the HMI was clear in asserting that the school would not be removed from special measures until the quality of the teaching was seen to be improving and not regressing. The headteacher adds: 'So that's the relationship you build up with them and the evidence you provide for them, about how you're tackling things now'.

The headteacher believes there are two agendas, which are not always and exactly complementary – and which could be contradictory. One is that the HMI want to see the headteacher and the school doing what they have been told to do. The other is that they want them to be questioning and making meaning for themselves – operating discretionary judgement. Headteacher G states: 'He would actually say "I'm not telling you to do anything ... but this is what I would like to see, and the route you choose to get there ... you have to question that what we are doing is the right thing"'. He would never get too much into process, he would question the appropriateness of styles and resources and accessing them for children. But ultimately if I questioned those things which were in the school practice when I got here, if I changed them because I felt they would be better, he would see that as a good thing'. The headteacher reported that although every visit started with a meeting between himself and the HMI, there was no set agenda. He states: 'He would just start talking ... but no pre-determined agenda ... his phrase, we still use was, KISS - keep it simple sunshine'. He continues: 'He (HMI) used to say to me the problem with this school is that everything is just too busy, too loud, people everywhere ... there are children here who can't learn, there are too many adults trying to help them ... He wanted to see that I was dealing with it'.

The headteacher regards his HMI as being 'one of the few very wise people I think I've ever met'. He reports that he is not a person initially given to long discussions, but what he says is worthy of close attention. He states: 'He would ask very simple three/four word questions, then allow you to either sink yourself or prove to him that you knew what you were doing. ... like, "What do you think about comprehension exercises in year 2?" ... "Do you think children should do language through art?" ... "How long do you think year 4 should have mental arithmetic lessons each week?"'. These questions sometimes led to longer conversations.

Headteacher G maintains that schools are eventually removed from special measures because of the capacity of those institutions, but he also believes that HMI want to see the adequacy of the headteacher. He states: 'Where there are problems still existing in school, they want to actually physically see that you are dealing with them appropriately ... walk the full mile ... if they have any doubts that you will not do what has to be done, then they won't take you out of special measures'. If the capacity of the headteacher is not there, then the HMI will not take the school out of special measures.

The LEA played an important role in underpinning the school's work. Nevertheless, the headteacher is adamant that a leader of a school in special measures has to be strong. It has to be somebody who has the vision and operational strategy as well as being prepared to stand up and be counted. Headteacher G maintains that he is accountable and not just a part of 'some fictional LEA team'. The roles, he believes, need dividing and the headteacher needs to make decisions that are appropriate to the school. Schools are unable to afford to follow a route that an LEA has formerly prescribed for all their schools. He states: 'We had to stand back and say no we're not doing that ... I'm not doing extended writing like that, I'm not doing the literacy hour like that'. He continues: 'If an inspector comes into a school, it should be left in a better state than when they arrived, that's my premise, and if it doesn't then something's gone very wrong'. Headteacher G believes that as a result of all that had happened 'the LEA sat up and thought we need to be more creative with our approaches to schools, one size will not fit all'.

Personal survival during the period of special measures

Headteacher G never felt he was being overwhelmed, although the situation was far worse than he had anticipated. This he rationalised in stating: 'It's about becoming part of the community and beginning to see that some doors hadn't been opened'. However, he also states: 'What I felt was an immense workload and immense pressure. I knew we would come out of special measures ... I knew it was achievable, but the only time I ever felt I really don't want to do this, but I've got to, is on the teacher issues, it was basically on sacking somebody'. The headteacher gained personal strength from his former experience and the fact that he was not part of the school's pre-inspection history and culture. He contends he never got to the point where his self-confidence was at a low ebb.

Headteacher G maintains that those leading their schools at the time of failure have a particularly daunting challenge. He believes that those same headteachers are likely to fail in the forthcoming years, citing the experience of those removed from special measures only to return. He states: 'Once ... removed you can slip back to what it was like previously ... I can see that happening.... (addressing the researcher), it's an important point for your study'.

Headteacher G maintained a sense of work-life balance through a rich and satisfying family life, giving him a sense of proportion and purpose. Nevertheless, he states: 'But I took an immense amount of work home with me ... the computer would come out and I would start work again for a couple of hours, and it was every night, and it was relentless ... until the time we came out'. In consideration of the fact that one has to live outside of the job, as well as inside, he continues: 'I am a cyclist and I live in (name of city) so when the clocks haven't gone back, once a week I cycle home or cycle here, and I do the reverse journey on the train, and a lot of cycling at home – so that's a kind of twenty two mile cycle ride'. He states it was about: 'Consciously doing it, always saying, I'm going to get this in, this comes first, work second, and it's very rare I broke that model'.

Leading out of and beyond special measures

On being removed from special measures the headteacher recognised that there was still a significant job to do. He states: 'Coming out of special measures is about showing the HMI ... actually you know what you're doing, you have the confidence to do it, the vision to do it, and you have the practical wherewithal to make it happen'. He states: 'If the headteacher doesn't hold that vision clear above everything else, then I don't think the school is going to get anywhere'. The headteacher believes it is more about the school's attitude to improvement and development than it is to its current levels of achievement. The accountabilities of headship are, he maintains, broad and far-reaching. He states: 'That's what I think we are paid for, that's why the buck stops here ... I didn't grasp this ten years ago, I've got it now with hindsight and this experience'. He reports that the governors now know what goes on inside the school: 'They know our targets; they spend a day a term in school, in the classes'.

Headteacher G maintains that the headteacher's leadership practice changes fundamentally once the school has left special measures. It is about an approach that is mediated through the articulation and the practical realisation of a vision. This depends on those who are around the leadership – the distributed leadership, the followership of the school. Beyond special measures headteachers can listen more and become adaptive to others' ideas. They can acknowledge more readily the efforts of others and reward people appropriately. The headteacher acknowledges that his approach to leading the pedagogy of the school has now changed, with more of a focus on sustainability. He maintains that in order to encourage a culture of responsibility, and to stop the school returning to the status of special measures, he has instigated more developmental monitoring that facilitates the growth of professional discretion. He states: 'It's long-term developmental cycles ... what we have built since those days (special measures) is a tremendous self-evaluative culture'. The development of pedagogy is now based on classroom observation that accentuates positive aspects of teaching and learning and provides a wealth of opportunity for discussing the developmental points that arise during the lesson. He continues: '(it has) nothing to do with performance management, it's me working with the year 6 teacher to prepare for national assessments or working with another teacher on a particular science topic; just really as another body in the school who teachers. And of course that's part of a very strong performance structure, not part of performance management'.

Finally, headteacher G describes the reality of the transformed culture that has permeated all aspects of the school's life – now a successful and outward-looking school. He states: 'We're going for Investors in People. We started the course in September, but their appraisal of us was such that we're going for judgement in February. So we'll basically skip the course, and we would never have been there but for being in special measures. That's helped us get in place a good system of performance management and investing in our people'. He claims: 'We've managed that because we are a team. My team self-evaluates, and we are a team where people are listened to ... a good school is incessantly looking to the problem of communication ... it's about listening to all those things that will make your school a better place'. The school continues to hold a compelling vision, some of which was started five years previously and some that is just being completed. He concludes: 'So it's because we've listened and people genuinely know and feel that part of our success is because of what they've done'.

Appendix 14

Emerging conceptual themes and operational characteristics (level 2 analysis)

These are as follows:

- 1) Headteachers had widely different perceptions of the usefulness and validity of the actual process and experience of their original OfSTED contracted inspections. In two cases, perceptions were that the inspection team had misunderstood the complexity (headteachers C and E), or underestimated the gravity of the school's situation (headteacher G) (Myers and Goldstein, 1998), in others the perception was that of a job well done (headteachers B, D and F).
- 2) Headteachers were aware of a 'phenomenal difference' between their first and second section 10 inspections (e.g. case 4) – they attributed changes to the process as being driven, to some extent, by the teaching profession itself.
- 3) Parental and community reactions to failing differed markedly and according to social-contextual factors (e.g. headteachers E and F).
- 4) Governors were largely unaware of the gravity of the school's predicament prior to the school being inspected – subsequently there were significant governor changes in terms of both personnel and practice – LEA services were particularly beneficial in this respect.
- 5) In all instances, the act of being placed in special measures was underpinned by the failure of leadership at school level, although in nearly all cases this was attributed (frequently backed by inspection documentation) to the incumbency of the previous headteacher (headteachers A, B, C, D, F and G). In case E the headteacher changed himself.
- 6) In order to be removed from special measures as quickly as possible, headteachers laboured under the prescription of a necessarily narrowly conceived and externally

prescribed top-down agenda of school improvement – driven by action plan and external agency.

- 7) Headteachers found that there were limited (or no) opportunities for networking with their colleagues – there was a tendency to be locked into the situation of the school.
- 8) In leading schools in special measures, there seem to be points or moments of professional or personal crisis, points that help define the headteacher's credentials, practice, and the way things are taken forward from that point onwards (headteacher F) – most examples include the parents' meeting after the school was placed in special measures.
- 9) There was high frequency of the application of teacher competency procedures – there was a high turnover of staff who taught at the time of the inspection.
- 10) There were difficulties of recruitment once in special measures, and the problem of having to accept, because of shortages, more failing teachers.
- 11) HMI were high influential in bringing about recovery in nearly all the cases, they were seen as encouraging and perceptive – showing much more intuitive awareness than contracted section 10 OfSTED inspectors. They were not looking for there being one route out of special measures, or for the application of packaged remedies (Myers and Goldstein, 1998).
- 12) In one case HMI were playing a game – devil's advocate (headteacher E). The headteacher presents an interesting individual perspective in which HMI goaded him to respond and hence react.
- 13) The LEA gave a strong lead and valuable support after schools had failed (headteachers A and E), but heads attributed a lack of awareness, and by implication, a lack of appropriate action prior to the schools being placed in special measures (all cases).

- 14) Action plans were not whole-school plans, but there was a tendency towards the formulation of such plans being undertaken by an 'elite' and then foisted on the rest of the staff – without, in the case of parachuted headteachers, enough contextual understanding of the school – one-offs to fit the crisis of the moment (headteachers A, B, D and E).
- 15) Action plans were formulated at a time of turbulence in the school, with many other conflicting demands being placed on the headteachers (headteachers A and D).
- 16) Leading through the experience of failing is like the process of bereavement (headteachers B and E) – the meeting with parents was an important cathartic experience, frequently charged with high emotion (headteachers A and D).
- 17) Leadership approach was more autocratic and directive during the period of special measures, and this contrasted with the headship style beyond the period of special measures.
- 18) There is evidence of changing style, transactional in special measures and different beyond that. One headteacher talked about choosing what is appropriate for the moment (headteacher A).
- 19) While style remains seemingly consistent, leadership approach changes in accordance with the phase/sub-phase of the school (headteachers A and D).
- 20) Some headteachers, but by no means all (headteacher D) suffered a serious crisis of confidence (headteachers C and E) (there may be a difference here between heads who were previously resident, newly appointed heads, and parachuted heads).
- 21) Headteachers offered instructional leadership in all cases – pedagogy was at the heart of their thinking about, and acting on, the process of recovery. Pedagogy was a key reason for the case schools being placed in special measures.
- 22) Leading the contraction of the numbers of pupils on roll was not an issue, but managing parental reaction was. After the inspection, parents, by and large,

maintained their faith in, and stayed with the school, although in one instance there had been a steady haemorrhaging of numbers prior to the inspection (headteacher D) – in one case (headteacher B) the headteacher readily encouraged parents to leave in order to reduce numbers.

- 23) The prior experience of the headteachers strongly influenced the way in which they saw and carried out their roles (headteacher B). Few had formal training, most learnt through apprenticeship and by learning 'on the job' (headteachers D and E).
- 24) The headteachers' attitudes to the necessity of failing (as deemed by OfSTED) vary markedly between the cases (e.g. headteachers E and F). The commonality of the reactions was in the productive use and the transformation of the experience.
- 25) There is some evidence of the contemporary educational discourse (literature review, chapter 2) of the performativity versus learning debate/conflict (Pollard, 1999) emerging from within the external support being offered to school/s (headteacher C).
- 26) 'Newly appointed' and 'parachuted heads' continue to seek out difficult schools for their next appointments (headteachers A, B and D).
- 27) Personal costs were high – marriage breakdown and other forms of personal crisis were mentioned (headteachers A, B and C) – all headteachers reflect on the difficulties of the work-life balance, which they all feel is substantially more intense when leading a school in special measures. Two headteachers received valued emotional support from specific named people in their LEAs.
- 28) While there may be some narrowly prescribed requirements for leading recovering and recovered schools, there are, nevertheless, a number of micro-political skills required, focusing on power relationships (Reynolds, 1998).
- 29) Some heads maintained that external perceptions of the design and realisation of their pathways through and to the point of recovery were at variance with their own preferred routes (e.g. headteacher G).

- 30) When removed from special measures, headteachers were still aware of the enormous task that lay ahead – being removed by HMI was therefore a licence to go it alone, not necessarily an accolade of having achieved, i.e. their removal was more about attitude than altitude.
- 31) In all cases, intensive ‘top-down’ monitoring regimes were relaxed after the schools were removed from special measures. Some sought more creative and ‘bottom-up’ ways of developing pedagogy (headteachers D and G).
- 32) The place and role of the children was invariably a consideration (e.g. headteacher F) – making them valued.
- 33) Headteachers, through the diversity of their situations, by design, practice and attitude, remained, to varying extents, as outsiders – thus preventing the institution institutionalising their leadership. A further threat, however, was that the instrumental rationality of ‘top-down’ improvement colonised the way that they led.
- 34) Limited distributed leadership – some mention the contribution of deputies (headteachers B and E) and in some they were part of the problem (headteacher C) – little or no use of subject leaders in the recovering period.
- 35) Tension between maintaining (attending to the little picture) and improving (attending to the big picture) (headteacher F).

Appendix 15

Framework for third level analysis

1. Conceptualising cultures of failure (and failing) – understanding special measures from within

- a) Features of failing in case study schools – can you generalise?
- b) Link to stages of bereavement
- c) Resulting culture
- d) Leadership – implications

2. Leading in a culture of recovery and improvement

- a) Process of action planning
- b) Resulting culture
- c) Leadership approach
- d) Critical /defining moments and significant points of departure

3. Efficacy and influence of external agency

- a) Inspection teams
- b) HMI
- c) LEA
- d) Networking – connections with other headteachers (collaborative agency)

4. Recognising personal and emotional needs of leaders of schools in special measures

- a) Leaders as emotional objects
- b) Emotional self (intelligence) and leadership
- c) Preservation of self – work-life balance

5. Moving beyond special measures – reculturation and redefinition

- a) Cultural typology
- b) Leadership (Management)
- c) Moving on

Appendix 16

How good the school is – most recent inspection

Headteacher /school	Headline inspection judgement	Inspection date	Headteacher still in post
A	Effective and improving school	06/2003	No
B	Good school	09/2002	Yes
C	Good and improving school	03/2003	No
D	Good infant school	06/2001	Yes
E	Good school	10/2001	Yes
F	SCHOOL CLOSED	N/A	N/A
G	Rapidly improving school	01/2001	Yes

This table presents statements taken from the most recent OfSTED inspection reports of the schools of the respective headteachers in this study. In each case the summative judgement is taken from the section: 'How good the school is'. School F was closed due to re-organisation. The table shows that four headteachers were still in their posts at the time of the inspection.